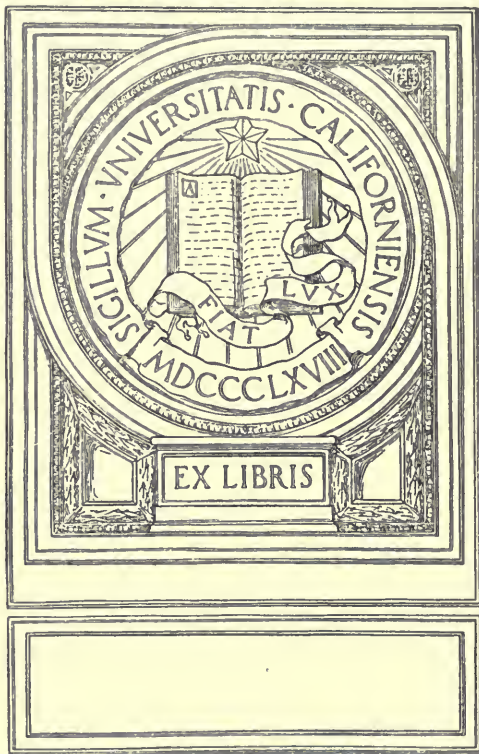


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# E S S A Y

O N T H E

## LAW of CELIBACY

IMPOSED ON THE

CLERGY of the Roman Catholic Church,

AND OBSERVED IN ALL THE

RELIGIOUS ORDERS abroad;

In which are delineated its rise, and progress from the most early ages of its existence, down to the present times; and the impropriety of this Ecclesiastical Constitution is shewn, whether it be considered in a moral, a physical, or a political light:

A S A L S O,

A summary account is given of the Origin of the MONASTIC Life; of the prejudices which chiefly contributed to introduce it, and in what manner these have been perpetuated; &c. Interspersed with various remarks upon several other observances of the Roman Catholic Discipline.

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*If in any point I am perplexed with doubts, I will not be afraid to seek; nor will I be ashamed, if I am in an error, to be instructed. Whoever, therefore, in perusing this, perceives the truth, let him proceed with me; or, if he still continues to doubt, let him join me in my researches. Should he, at any time, discover that he has been misled, let him come over to me; or endeavour to recall me to his opinion, if he has reason to judge that I have been mistaken.*

AUGUST. lib 1 de Trinit.

*Da veniam, si quid liberius dixi, non ad contumeliam tuam, sed ad defensionem meam. Præsumpsi enim de gravitate et prudentia tua, quia potes considerare quantam mihi respondendi necessitatem imposueris.*

IDEM. Epist. 238 ad Pascent.

Search the Scriptures. JOHN 5, 39.

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**I**N a small pamphlet which I published not long since, my subject led me to make a few observations on the law of Celibacy, which is prescribed to the Clergy of the Roman Catholic Church; and which is esteemed a fundamental rule, in most of the Religious establishments abroad. These, I find, have given some offence. As the sentiments I there expressed, were, in great measure, opposite to those which generally prevail amongst Roman Catholics; some of my positions have been controverted, and others, positively rejected. In order, therefore, to vindicate the truth of what I incidentally advanced upon that occasion, I thought it would not be improper to consider this subject more fully, and enter upon a more minute discussion of the reasons which engaged me to adopt that opinion.

This labour may appear, perhaps, at first sight, superfluous; and the whole controversy  
B of

of little importance, in a Kingdom where neither the obligation, nor the propriety of such a law, with respect to the numerous body of the Christian Clergy, is admitted. But, as it is a fact, that these institutions are not only revered as sacred, but are actually embraced by many of our fellow Citizens who fly to a voluntary exile in foreign climates, to the prejudice of their mother Country; and by thousands of either sex, in every state where the Roman Catholic discipline prevails, to the detriment of society in general; it is the interest of every individual, of every Citizen of the world, to have this matter duly canvassed, and exhibited in its proper light. Thus considered, it is no longer a subject fit, merely, for private speculation or debate, but becomes of public concern: and claims the attention of all who have at heart the general advantage of mankind, and are willing to promote its welfare.

The task I have undertaken, is not, however, without it's difficulties; as the ideas of many most respectable men in every age, have so widely differed in this regard, and the discipline of the Church has been so various, in different periods of time. Yet, amidst this variety of opinions, I will endeavour to trace out the history of this oppressive injunction, and to appreciate its supposed utility. For, we may say of it, as Bos-



SUET did of Theatrical entertainments; “Il y a de grands exemples pour, mais de fortes raisons contre.” The propriety of it may be defended by great examples; but combated with solid arguments. Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that a state of continency has been celebrated by many of the ancient Fathers with great encomiums, and marriage has been rather depreciated and contemned. To these traditionary authorities, therefore, I will oppose others equally respectable and conclusive. In short, as Scripture, authority, and reason have been appealed to in support of this opinion; with what degree of truth they have, severally, been affirmed to favour it, I will endeavour to shew in the course of this Essay. How far I shall have succeeded, I shall leave to the impartial, after a candid perusal of it, to determine. I have chiefly collected only what others have said before me upon this subject; but, I have aimed to draw the controversy within a narrower compass: Especially, as without ever losing sight of my principal subject, I have, occasionally introduced such other discussions, as may render this Essay more interesting and comprehensive, than will probably be apprehended from a bare inspection of its Title page. My wish is, rather to be useful by contributing to support what I really esteem the cause of truth, than to seek unmerited and unsatisfactory applause, by advancing any opinions which may disturb the

peace of the Community. On the contrary; it is in defence of its most sacred rights that I have here presumed to stand forth, without any other pretensions to the favour of the public, than what the merits of the cause itself may deserve. I have combated mistaken notions that have long prevailed; but I have neither treated them ludicrously, nor with contempt. Ancient prejudices deserve at all times a certain degree of respect; but our deference for them should not be carried so far, as to command our silent homage, when they evidently tend to destroy the happiness of mankind.

Different opinions will, I am confident, be passed upon the following Essay, according to the different sentiments which my Readers of every various persuasion have adopted, from prejudices of education, or a too ready acquiescence in the notions of those to whom they have been taught to look up, and from whose decisions they scarce esteem it lawful to appeal. But to such as willingly place themselves beyond the reach of conviction, the perusal of the following observations will be useless. They are addressed to those alone, who, in search of truth, are willing to consider them with due attention, and without any previous bias. If they perceive any merit in them, they will endeavour to countenance the doctrine they support: But, if they appear fallacious and inconclusive, let them



them expose their fallacy, and place the controversy in a truer point of view.

That the Celibacy of the Clergy was not instituted by Christ, nor by the Apostles, is allowed in general by most Roman Catholic Divines; and by all those Councils, Popes, and Doctors, who hold it lawful in the Greek Church, for all such Subdeacons, Deacons, and Priests who enter into the marriage state before their ordination, to continue still to live with their wives. "The tradition of the eastern Churches," say the Decretals, *part 1. distinct. 31. cap. 14; ex Con. Lat. IV. an. 1215. sub Innoc. 3.* "is different from that of the Holy Church of Rome; for their Priests, Deacons, and Subdeacons are married men." So also the Canon law; "*Copula sacerdotalis nec Evangelica, nec legali, vel apostolica autoritate prohibetur. Gratian caus. 26. q. 2. c. 1. and, caus. 34. p. 1. in fin. (a)*" And Johan. a Ludegna in the council of

(a) That I may not over-burden this Essay with unnecessary quotations in two different languages, I shall sometimes refer the Reader to the notes at the bottom of the page, without always giving an English version of them, when the same doctrine has, already, been sufficiently established in the text. This would only serve to swell the pamphlet beyond its intended bulk, without conveying any further information.

It may not be improper, at the same time, to remark that I shall mostly cite those passages from the Greek Fathers, which I may have occasion to introduce, from the latin translations that accompany their works; Because, living in the country, I have not the convenience of printing them in the language in which they were originally written.

Trent, when he said “*Constitutio sacerdotum cælibatum non esse Juris Divini, aut quoquam modo ab apostolis præceptum.*” *I affirm that the Celibacy of Priests is not of divine appointment, nor in any manner commanded by the Apostles.*” Nor is such a law, indeed, ever insinuated by the Evangelists, or by the Apostles; most of whom, it appears, were married men. Thus St. Peter, as is evident from *Matt. 8. v. 14.* was married: And Clem. Alexan. *Lib 3. Strom.* assures us that he had several children. When his Wife suffered martyrdom; he himself exhorted her to undergo it with constancy. (a) Hence, she must have accompanied him in his travels; as none, except St. Stephen and St. James, suffered for their faith, till the latter end of Nero’s reign, when St. Peter was wholly employed in the West. That St. Paul was married, is attested by great authorities. Clem. Alexan. expressly affirms it. (b) Eusebius *Lib. 3. His. Eccles. c. 30.* admits the same. Methodius, who died a martyr soon after 311, says, he lived in widowhood and a state of continency: *Conviv.*

(a) Euseb. *lib. 3. c. 30.* and Baluze *miscell. tom. 1.*

(b) Whenever in citing the ancient Fathers or other holy men, I omit the title of *Saint*; it is not out of any disrespect for their persons, as there are many amongst them whom I greatly honour and revere: But, because I esteem it an unmeaning, and often, an improper distinction. When I have occasion to mention some of the more modern *Saints*, I generally, however, have paid them that compliment, because it might, otherwise, not be understood by many, of what persons I was speaking.

*Virg.*

*Virg.* Chrysoſtom *de virg.* c. 82, ſeems of the ſame opinion; and adds, in another place, that ſeveral, in his time, maintained that thoſe words of the Apoſtle, *Epif. ad Philip.* c. 4. *True yoke fellow*, which in the Attic dialect may be rendered, *my faithful partner*, (a) were addreſſed to his wife. Beſides, the words which immediately follow in the original, plainly ſhew that it was ſpoken of ſome *female* aſſiſtant. Clemens Alex. alſo poſitively affirms that the Apoſtle, *1 Cor.* 9, ſpoke of his *Wife*. (b) And though Tertullian, from whom all the ancients ſeem to have derived their opinion, when he became a *Montaniſt*, explained this paſſage ſimply of a *Chriſtian Woman*; Yet, he introduces the Catholics objecting to him “*Licebat et Apoſtolis nubere, et uxores circumducere; the apoſtles even were allowed to marry, and travel in company with their wives.*” Which ſhews what was then the ſenſe given to this expreſſion amongſt the *Orthodox*. Nay we ſee from the interpolator of St. Ignatius’s *Epistles*, that St. Peter, and St. Paul, and other Apoſtles, (or, the reſt of the Apoſtles) *uſed marriage*. (c) That this paſſage

was

(a) See Eraſm. Cajetan, Catharinus, &c. or the authorities cited by Dom Calmet on this text, and on *1 Cor.* ix. 5.

(b) Et Paulus, quidem, non veretur in quadam epiſtola ſuam appellare uxorem. . . . dicit enim, *non habemus poteſtatem mulierem ſororem circumducendi, ſicut et reliqui Apoſtoli?* See *lib. 3. Strom.* and the writers named in the foregoing note.

(c) Petrus, et Paulus, et reliqui Apoſtoli, nuptiis fuerunt ſociati: qui non libidinis cauſa, ſed poſteritatis ſubrogandæ gratia, conjuges habuerunt. *Ignat. ad Philadelph. Edit. Voſſii.* He cannot ſpeak of the time that preceded their Apoſtleſhip, ſince he mentions this to prove that many *holy men*

was not corrupted since the Reformation, appears from various editions made before that time: And that it is *genuine*, may be seen in Usher *Dissertat. in Ignat. c. 17*, and Cotelarius, *Annot. in Locum*. Whether it be a fact, or not, that the Apostles in their missions were accompanied by their wives, 1 *Cor. c. 9*. (who, surely, were much more proper to attend them than any other *pious* women whatever;) Yet, all this dispute about it, evidently shews, that it was not believed in these early days, either to have been prescribed by Christ, or to be the practice of the Apostles to live separate from their wives, whether as a duty of *precept*, or a counsel of *propriety*.

St. Philip had *three* daughters, whom he married to so many husbands. (a) Of those of Philip the Deacon we read *Acts 21. 9*. In fine, the author of the commentary upon the Epist. of St. Paul, amongst St. Ambrose's works, says, "All the Apostles, except John and Paul were married." See also Epiphanius *hæres. 28*. Cotelarius cites Eusebius, S. Basil, and some others, for the same opinion.

men were married, in opposition to the sentiments of some, who violently declaimed against that state; and expressly says, *Posteritatis subrogandæ gratia; with an intention of having children*. If he only alluded to what they did before they were called by Christ, the argument falls to the ground. Nor were they supposed, in any sense, to be men of superior Virtue, till after the descent of the Holy Ghost; hence we cannot imagine that they would, before that time, be cited as an example, by Ignatius.

(a) Clemens Alexan. *lib. 3 Strom.*

Eusebius



Eusebius *lib. 3. c. 30.* where he tells us that St. Paul was married; says, that he led not his wife about with him, *that he might be able to discharge the duties of an Apostle with greater readiness.* “*Ut expeditior ministerium obiret.*” If this be the case; how ridiculous to suppose, without any authority, that all those who were engaged in marriage, lived in Continency with their wives; although it is so positively asserted by S. Jerom. This opinion is, certainly, destitute of proof: And it would have been an example of no great edification for the Apostles to have avoided the company of their own wives, while they permitted the attendance of other women, however *pious* and *chaste*. Hence it seems much more natural to explain the words of St. Paul, *1 Cor. ix.* of a *Wife* who is a *Christian*, a *Sister* in Faith. What was the practice of other Holy Men, in the first and purest ages of the Church; we shall examine hereafter.

The great respect for the state of Celibacy which possessed the minds of many in these early times, was, probably; first introduced by the *Montanist* Tertullian, who wanted to refine upon the Christian system of morality, supposing something unclean even in the chaste use of marriage. And we shall observe lower down, that virginity was never so much cried up as the consummation of all virtues, (except by two or three *enthusiastic* admirers of it,) as in the most ignorant,

norant, debauched and barbarous periods of Ecclesiastical history. I say *Enthusiastic Admirers* of it: And for the propriety of this expression I appeal to the writings of some of the Fathers of the fourth age, where the effusions of a warm fancy, and rhetorical declamation, supply the place of argument, and the judicious moralist is, frequently, lost in the pious Enthusiast. It is but justice, nevertheless, to acknowledge, that it was more necessary in the beginnings of the Christian Church, to inculcate, on every occasion, the excellency of Chastity in the strongest terms, by reason of the unnatural passions which were then indulged, beyond measure, among the Gentiles. See *Epist. to the Rom. c. 1, v. 26, &c.*

But the idea of any uncleanness in marriage, is evidently contrary both to reason and to scripture. It is there esteemed *honourable in all*; and we see it was appointed by God himself when he created Man, in a state of *Innocence*, and told him that *it was not good to be alone*. Hence Paphnucius, a holy unmarried Bishop in the council of Nice, pronounced the embraces of a lawful wife to be *Chastity*. This consists in a moderate and well-regulated use of our passions and senses; and continency is only then a virtue, when it contributes more than a state of marriage, to the glory of God, and the happiness and sanctification of the individual (a). The marriage

(a) It has, indeed, in latter ages been discovered, that there is a particular crown reserved in Heaven for such as have

marriage rites may seem to include some degree of *natural* uncleanness; and we read that continency was prescribed to all the Jewish people, for three days before they received the Law on Sinai. Yet, perhaps, even in this typical religion, was it enjoined more out of *political* than *religious* motives. But all the ancient Patriarchs, Prophets, Saints, and Priests, were called to this state; and we see from their writings that it was in general esteemed the most rational and the most happy. Neither Virginity, nor Marriage, is essentially preferable to each other with respect to all mankind; but only relatively so, according to circumstances, as either is most likely to contribute to the tranquillity of the mind. And it was the opinion of S. Chrysostom, *Homil. 21 in Genes.* that “Marriage does not only not hinder the practice of divine Philosophy, if we will be sober; but also administers to us great assistance in it, by calming the turbulencies of nature, and not permitting it to be tossed in tempests, but preparing it a haven wherein to ride securely.” Perhaps, in the infancy of the Christian Church,

have always lived in Celibacy: See S. Thomas, and other Roman Catholic writers. But S. Paul was, probably, not *Theologian* enough to be acquainted with this circumstance: Since, speaking of his flock at Corinth, which was composed of married persons, virgins, widows, and converts, many of whom (see *Tit. 3. 3. Ephes. iii. 2. Coloss. iii. 7*) had, possibly, been adulterers, fornicators, &c. before they became *Christians*; he says indiscriminately of all; that he had espoused them to one husband, in order to present them a *pure virgin* unto Christ, *2 Cor. 11.*

when the Ministers of the Gospel were obliged to travel and preach about the country without any settled abode; and when the unavoidable solicitude for the safety of a wife and children, in times of persecution, rendered a single life more desirable, as it was likely to be *short* and uncertain, something might have been urged in favour of it; and this was, no doubt, the Apostle's meaning 1 Cor. vii. as shall be shewn more largely hereafter. But these reasons subsist no longer, and the persuasion of the excellence of Celibacy, and of the merit of being unconnected with the rest of mankind, must arise from a mistaken notion of perfection, which consists not in an unactive state of contemplation, but in discharging the ordinary duties of life with piety, integrity, and fortitude.

That there is any indecency in the use of marriage, which renders it unfit for a Priest to proceed from the chaste embraces of a wife, to the administration of holy things, in a *moral* sense, is, really, absurd; a conceit unworthy the law of liberty and grace, and little thought of in the early ages of the Church, when most Christians daily received the eucharist, without entertaining any such irrational apprehensions. This was a discovery reserved to the Marcionites, Encratites and other such reformers of the Gospel: and it is truly an humiliating reflection, that man should ever give into the absurdities which some of the ancients have, under this persuasion, advanced. Thus S. Aug. *de sanc vir-*



gin. c. 6. seems only to allow marriage to such as would be damned without it. "*Tribulationem istam carnis* (of which the Apostle, 1 Cor. vii.) *suscipere tolerandam perstultum esset*, says he, *nisi metueretur incontinentibus, ne, tentante Satana, in peccata damnabilia laberentur.*" Origen, *hom. 17 in Luc.* says, "It is my opinion that a person who has successively married two wives, although he has every other virtue, is not a member of the Church." (a) S. Jerom: "as the Apostle permits not married men to dismiss their wives, so he takes away from virgins the liberty to marry (b)". And again, writing against Jovinian, "If it is good for a man not to touch a woman, therefore it is evil to touch her:—While I perform the duty of an husband, I do not discharge that of a Christian.—The Apostle commandeth us to pray always; if so, we must never serve the ends of marriage; for as often as I comply with these, I cannot pray.—Marriage is only permitted as a remedy to lust; it being more tolerable to be prostituted to one than to many." Athanasius is perhaps even more express: But common sense, as well as decency forbids any further extracts. Indeed, Jerom upon a review of his book

(a) Puto digamum, licet ---- cæteris virtutibus polleat, non esse tamen de Ecclesia. *Hom. 6 in Num.* he is equally severe. "Connubia legitima, says he, carent quidem peccato, nec tamen tempore illo quo Conjugales actus geruntur, presenspiritus sancti dabitur, etiamsi Propheta esse videatur, qui officio generationis obsequitur." Why then did God say to our first parents, *Encrease and multiply*, if their obedience was to deprive them of his holy spirit?

(b) Sic virginibus, nubendi amputat facultatem.

against

against Helvidius, was forced to acknowledge that he had in the heat of controversial zeal, transgressed the limits of *reason*, and indulged his *fancy*. “*Rhetorici sumus, says he, and in morem declamatorum paululum lusimus.*” If, however, he thus permitted himself to be hurried away by passion, how little can we depend upon his authority in any point, which it is his view to prove, or to promote! (a) But the Fathers were not at all times the most dispassionate of men. This same *Saint*, when his friend Rufinus was expected in Jerusalem, in a letter to his correspondent, tells him that “he soon would see a person, who shone with every virtue; whilst he himself was but *dust*, not fit to contemplate with his weak eyes, such eminent sanctity.” Yet, shortly after, upon some disagree-

(a) He had proceeded so far, says Erasmus, *de Epif. conf.* that the *orthodox* Bishops obliged him to retract. Nor can we wonder at this, when we find him in various places advancing the most extravagant propositions: As when *Lib. adver. Helvid.* he says, “We deny not that there are some married women who are holy; but they are such only as have ceased to be wives. *Non negamus sanctas Maritatas mulieres inveniri; sed quæ uxores esse deserunt.* Or, *contra Jovin.* where he explains the words of the Apostle 1 Cor. vii, *But I spare you*, by “*Taceo autem quæ damnatio maneat conjugatos in futura vita, ut infirmis parcam, qui jam sunt in matrimonio.*” An excellent device to draw votaries to convents, by persuading them, that they will be damned (or *condemned*) if they do not renounce marriage! But, how different are these sentiments from those of S. Chrysostom, *hom. 21 in Genesin.* where he assures us that “If marriage were any hindrance to us in the pursuit of virtue, the sovereign Lord of all things would never have introduced it into the system in which he has placed us, not to give occasion to our ruin, in a thing which is so *necessary* to us.”

ment about the writings of Origen, he recalled whatever he had written in his praise, and loaded him with the most opprobrious treatment. In his controversy with Vigilantius, he compares him to the *Hydra*, *Cerberus*, and other *monsters*; and considers him as *the organ of the Devil*, *Tom. 2 pag. 120, and ff.* See also the account which S. Austin gives of the Priscillianists, full of calumnies and misrepresentations, as the judicious Lardner has clearly demonstrated. But a visible partiality pervades the writings of most controvertists, as well as historians, when they treat of opinions different from their own; or are obliged to mention occurrences, which, if they could, they willingly would conceal. Of this we have a remarkable instance in Tillemont, who speaking of the extraordinary and whimsical ordination of Nectarius, who was appointed to the Episcopal see of Constantinople before he was baptized, as is attested by Sozomen *lib 7, c. 8*, concludes with this wise and cautious remark: "After all, this account given by Sozomen reflects so much disgrace on all those who were concerned in it, and particularly on Theodosius, that we had better do our best endeavours to invalidate, than strive to support it." *An excellent Canon of Criticism*, says Mr. Gibbon! And, surely, a likely method, on all such occasions, of arriving at the knowledge of truth.

Whatever precautions are taken either in admitting young persons to Holy orders, or to profession  
in

in a monastic state; or by the young votaries themselves: we must allow that the law of Celibacy has often given rise to much incontinence and scandal. And we should not be guided in our researches by mere speculative reasonings and suppositions, but take the state of society as it really is. Now S. Bernard observes *Serm. 66 in Cant.* that “if you take away from the Church honourable marriage and the bed undefiled, you fill it with fornicators, incestuous persons, Sodomites, and every species of uncleanness.” This, surely, cannot recommend the law which obliges so many thousand to Celibacy, in any community or state, where purity of manners is esteemed worthy of the attention of the legislature. And we shall see hereafter, that S. Bernard’s observation was often justified by the actual state of the Church, resulting from this injudicious appointment.

Moreover, considering the question in a moral light, we may add the just remark of Clem. Alex. *L. 3 Strom.* “Marriage as well as Celibacy has its peculiar offices and duties pleasing to God; I mean the care of children and wife. Whence the Apostle commandeth those to be chosen Bishops, who from the virtuous government of their own families, have learned to preside well over the Church.” And, *lib. 7.* “In truth, a man approveth not himself by chusing a single life: But he transcends the ordinary rank of men, who useth marriage and the procreation of children, and the government



government of a family without immoderate affection or anxiety; and notwithstanding the care of his house, is unalterable in the love of God." Nay, he even seems, in some degree, to give this state the preference, when he says in the same work, "He that is solicitous only about himself, is excelled by him, who though he is, indeed, his inferior in what concerns his own salvation; surpasses him in those things which appertain to a right discharge of the duties of life. (a)" And it was, no doubt, for these chiefly, that Man was placed in this state of trial.

From the like considerations, it may be justly questioned even by those who are the most strenuous advocates for the authority of the Church, whether it has any right to assume such a power over the Christian Priesthood, as to prescribe to it the severe law of Continence, (b). The power

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intrusted

(a) Qui sui solummodo curam gerit, vincitur ab eo qui cum sit inferior quidem in illis quæ pertinent ad suam salutem, superior, autem in iis quæ ad vitæ spectant dispensationem.

(b) The Reader will here observe that I argue on the principles of those who are willing to allow the Church a much more extensive authority, than can be proved from Scripture ever to have been granted to it by Christ. For my own part, I firmly adhere to that of S. Jerom in cap. 23. Matt. *Quod de Scripturis auctoritatem non habet, eadem facilitate contemnitur, qua probatur*; And am really of opinion that no doctrine which can not be evidently proved from the sacred Scriptures, has a right to command our belief, or can with propriety be laid down as the rule of our moral conduct. *Sufficiunt Sanctæ ac Divinitus inspiratæ Scripturæ*, says Athanasius *contra Gentes, ad omnem instructionem veritatis*. These, in fact,

intrusted to its pastors was given *for edification, and not for destruction*, 2 Cor. x, 8. Now, in this case, the expediency and utility of such a law is very doubtful at best ; or rather, its evil tendency is evident, both from reason and from experience. Nor can any person easily persuade himself that the Church was ever authorised by Christ to deprive him of those comforts which nature and reason offer him, by any positive ordinance, contrary to the very genius and constitution of the Christian Religion. Yet this despotic power has been exerted so far, that many Popes and Councils have, at different times, commanded the married Clergy to be separated from their wives, under pain of excommunication ; although they often protested that they had never made a vow of Celibacy, and could not persevere in a virtuous life unless permitted to remain in wedlock. — *See their address to Nicholas the Second.*

To this I know it will be replied, that it is a compact agreed to by all such as are admitted amongst

fact, teach us every thing both to be believed and to be practised : nor has a rational inquirer any other solid foundation on which he can rest his faith. In the course of his researches, as Mr. Chillingworth somewhere observes, he will find Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, Fathers against Fathers, and the seeming consent of the Christian Doctors in one age, different from that of the most learned and pious Christians in another : so that every system but this, is full of perplexity and doubts. Whereas, as S. Cyprian remarks Ep. ad Pomp. *In compendio est apud Religiosas mentes et errorem deponere, et Invenire atque eruere veritatem. Nam si ad Divinæ traditionis caput & originem revertamur, cessat error humanus.*

amongst the Clergy, or into Religious houses. But, supposing this; a point we shall consider hereafter: Why should so many other members of society who may be desirous of serving God and their Neighbours in an Ecclesiastical state, and having a right, if in other respects found worthy, to be admitted into the ministry, be excluded, merely because unwilling to subscribe to this tyrannical law, obtruded upon them without any warrant from the sacred Scriptures? From these it is evident that all men *have not* the gift of Continence, as we will shew when we come to consider the text of the Apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 7. And though Almighty God has engaged himself to give sufficient grace to all men for the performance of their duties and the attainment of salvation; yet he never promised it in circumstances thus injudiciously embraced: For who will presume, at an early period of life, in the silence of passion and absence from occasion, to affirm that in a maturer age, and under other circumstances Almighty God will favour him with this special gift? It may here be said, that the state of marriage is liable to the same objections; that even this may, in some cases, fail to be a remedy to incontinence: for example, by the *necessary* absence of one of the parties, or any other of the accidental misfortunes which man, unhappily, *is heir to*. But, on such occasions, we cannot doubt that God will bestow the necessary virtue when duly asked; because he has himself ordained this tie to be indissoluble, and has provided no other remedy. In other cases, we must

have recourse to those he has appointed; and not sit down in idle expectation of supernatural assistance. So, although St. Paul says 1 Cor. vii, "I would that all men were even as myself;" that is, blessed with this peculiar virtue: Yet he also says c. 14. "I would that all men spake with tongues:" Where he manifestly does not advise us to pray for these extraordinary gifts, but to give thanks for such as we *have* received, and make the best of those talents which *have been* intrusted to our care. Neither is it affirmed by Roman Catholic Theologians that all men *can* contain, unless they use the vast precautions which may be necessary to their peculiar temperaments. Now, corporal austerities, long fastings and continual watchings, chains, disciplines, and hair-cloths, will, certainly, in some degree subdue the flesh; but when practised with severity and perseverance, they will also injure the bodily health, weaken the energy of the soul, destroy its peace and happiness, render a person totally unfit for the discharge of his duty; and hinder the practice of solid piety and virtue, much more than marriage ever could obstruct it. Besides, it is known that many persons who have obstinately persevered in a single life, have notwithstanding all their endeavours, prayers, and austerities, been rendered miserable by the importunities of passion, to their dying day. Others have been persuaded, from the same motives, to embrace the strangest methods of torture, not only destructive of all enjoyment, but even, almost of life itself. See the lives of Maca-

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rius of Alexandria, Simeon Stylites, &c: Or read the terrible description given us by S. John Climacus of a monastery in Egypt called *the Prison*, where the extravagant observances dictated by a spirit of *penance* or outrageous *zeal*, were such as have scarce been exceeded since by the ridiculous practices related of the Mahometan Fakirs. "I saw some of them, says he, who passed the whole night standing in the open air, to combat nature and prevent themselves from sleeping: - - - Others with their hands tied behind their backs, cried out incessantly, that they were not worthy to look up to Heaven. Some, again, seated on haircloth and ashes, hid their face between their knees, and beat their foreheads against the ground. - - - Their skin cleaved to their bones, and was withered as grass. — You might behold some with their parched-up tongues hanging from their mouths, who, when they had tasted a drop of water that they might not die with thirst, refused a further draught, - - or who, after having taken a mouthful of bread, rejected the rest, because they judged themselves unworthy of the food of men. - - Their knees were grown callous; their eyes were shrunk into their heads; their cheeks were inflamed with tears, and yet their visage was pale and ghastly. Their bosom was bruised with stones, which sometimes made them cast up blood. - - - They knew neither the use of beds, nor cleanliness in their garments, which were nothing but tattered filthy rags, overrun with vermin." In what light could these fanatics consider the Almighty *Father of mercies and God*  
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of all comfort 2 Cor. i. but as a cruel, unrelenting, despotic Tyrant!

It may, moreover, be observed that the greatest patrons of Celibacy have not been able themselves to preserve that virtue unblemished, which they were so fond of imposing upon others. Thus Tertullian *de Spect.* 19 & *de Resur.* 59, acknowledges, that in his youth, he had been guilty of all the debaucheries of his age, and laboured under a total corruption of manners. S. Epiphanius ingenuously confesses, *hær.* 26, that he was inveigled in his youth by the artifices and lusts of the Gnostic women. S. Jerom tells us *Apol. ad Pammac. ep.* 50, that he had lost his virtue. "I extoll virginity to the skies, not because I possess it, but because I the more admire what I want myself." and *ad Chromat. Ep.* 43, "you know, says he, the slippery path of youth, in which I also fell." S. Anselm, in an ancient manuscript which is preserved in the King's Library at St. James's, has a prayer entitled, *A lamentation on the loss of my virginity*; where he bewails his guilt in the most unequivocal terms. Thus far we may affirm from their own confessions. (a)

And,

(a) The terms in which many of the *Saints* express their own defeat, or, at least, their temptations, are perhaps exaggerated: But they prove undeniably, the difficulties of their enterprise. One would, almost, be induced to think that they rated the merits of their victories, only by the measure of their struggles in the combat. According to the same rule, the ingenious artists of Augsburg, who, as Keyssler tells us, can turn an hundred ivory cups so very small that they can

And, we know that of the founders of four principal religious orders, *S. Francis* was, by the acknowledgment of Walsingham, addicted in his youth to the most licentious pleasures; as well as *S. Ignatius*, by the concession of Ribadeneira. And, *S. S. Benedict* and *Dominic*, if they were not vanquished, were at least harrassed by such violent sollicitations of their *adversary*, that they were obliged to rowl their naked bodies upon thorns, or whip themselves with iron chains, to subdue their raging passions. The same is related of thousands, in the *Lives of Saints*. As if the Apostle, instead of saying, *let every one, to avoid incontinence, have his own wife*, had said: let every one scourge and torment his body; let him destroy his health, and be covered with filth and nastiness; let him degrade himself beneath the dignity of man, that he may acquire the purity and virtues of an Angel. Whereas we do not find that in his advice to younger widows, he even prescribes fasting and prayer, to enable them to live in continence; but expressly counsels them to marry. However, it is much easier to enjoin such laws to others, than to observe them ourselves. This, to cite some conspicuous examples, was fatally experienced by John the 10th, 12th, 23d, Benedict the 3d, Sergius 3d, Clement 5th, Alexander

be inclosed in a common pepper corn, are equally entitled to the gratitude of mankind, with Dr. Priestly, who has so much benefitted it by his valuable discoveries upon air: As if every undertaking in life should not be estimated in proportion to its usefulness, and the advantages that may be derived from it to society.

Alexander 6th, Innocent 8th and 10th, Boniface 7th, Leo the 10th, and other sovereign pontiffs, whose scandalous debaucheries are universally admitted. (a)

It is also a remark worthy of attention, that the most strenuous advocates for Celibacy have at all times sought the company of women, though they so severely prohibited their disciples the same indulgence. "In the capital of the empire, says M. Gibbon, in his *History of the Rom. Emp.* vol. 2, c. 25, The females of noble and opulent houses - - renounced for the praise of chastity the soft endearments of conjugal society. Some Ecclesiastic of real or apparent sanctity was chosen to direct their timorous conscience, and to amuse the vacant tenderness of their heart; and the unbounded confidence which they hastily bestowed, was often abused by knaves and enthusiasts, who hastened from the extremities of the East, to enjoy on a splendid theatre, the priviledges of the monastic profession. By their contempt of the world, they insensibly acquired its most desirable advantages; the lively attachment, perhaps, of a young and beautiful woman, the delicate plenty of an opulent household, and the respectful

(a) I have cited these in preference to any other persons, merely to shew that no station on Earth, however exalted, is free from the attacks of passion; and that when natural means are set aside, no consideration whatever of duty, good example, or the scandal such irregular conduct gives in those from whom greater perfection is required, is sufficient to counterbalance, in some temperaments, the dangerous influence of temptation and opportunity.



respectful homage of the slaves, the freed-men, and the clients of a senatorial family." This observation, without casting any reflection upon the integrity of many of these holy men, shews the natural propensity of one sex to the other, and confirms that thought of the poet, *naturam expellas furca, licet usque recurret*: It will insinuate itself in one shape or other. Thus Rufinus had an infinite attachment and regard for the celebrated Melanija, who had redeemed him out of slavery, and took him with her into Palestine. And the young Eustochium, the devout Fabiola, the widows Paula and Marcella were, during life, the objects of the tender care and solicitude of S. Jerom. He was obliged to beat his bosom with stones to repress the risings of passion: He prayed, and fasted, "not because God, says he, *Tom. i. ad Eustoch.* is delighted with the rumbling noise of our intestines, nor with the emptiness of our stomach and the burning heat of our lungs, but, because chastity can not be preserved without it:" Yet he never thought it his duty to renounce the close connections which subsisted between him and his *spiritual* daughters. For these he studied the Hebrew tongue; for these he composed the vulgate version of the bible; and for these alone he left the solitary rocks of Palestine, to engage himself in the tumultuous scenes of Rome. He even wrote their lives, and became the fond panegyrist of those virtues which he had cultivated, with so much assiduity, in these tender plants. Yet could he not entirely escape

the censures of the world for these complacencies, as he acknowledges himself in the life of S. Marcella: And his vehement invectives against the luxury of the Clergy and Monks, (see *Tom. 1.*) were retorted on him with equal acrimony, and the most injurious accusations; although he solemnly declares, that he never abused the influence he had over the minds of these Ladies, to any selfish or sensual purpose.

Whoever has resided in Roman Catholic Countries, cannot but have observed that the same spirit still subsists, amongst the great variety of spiritual directors, both in the secular and regular Clergy abroad. Each Jesuit, Benedictin, Carmelite, Norbertin, Augustinian, Bernardin, Dominican, Franciscan, and Capucin confessarius to *Devotes*, whether in the world, or in the cloister, has still (and we hope with no less pure intentions than S. Jerom) his Eustochium, Fabiola, or Melania, whose virtues he celebrates, whose heart he directs and guides, and whose company and conversation serve to make him some amends for the austerities, retreat, and self-denials, to which his state condemns him, when at home. The fact is of public notoriety: and the enjoyments of many a *director* of the Fair Sex, who is in vogue in a Roman Catholic Country, exhibit a situation *devoutly to be wished for*. He is everywhere made welcome and caressed; his penitents vie with each other, in presenting him with all the little *douceurs* and

and comforts of life: and, upon the most trifling complaint, the holy Father's health becomes the object of their anxious concern. It is chiefly to the presents made to these, or to the Convents upon their account, that the Begging Orders owe their subsistence. (a)

It has been said, with respect to many amongst those who in their writings seem most enamoured with a life of Celibacy, that it was often a satiety and glut of unlawful gratifications, which produced a contempt of lawful enjoyments. This was, perhaps, an illiberal insinuation. Yet, it certainly happened not unfrequently, that an injudi-

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cious

(a) Although S. Jerom affirms, as we have seen above, that he never abused the opportunities which his spiritual functions gave him, to any improper end; and many of those who are now engaged in the same perillous employment, may discharge their duties with equal integrity; yet it has not been always so. Clemangis, speaking of his own times, affirms *De planctu Ecc.* that the Mendicants were then so many rapacious wolves in the coverings of sheep. He says that they devoured the offerings of the faithful in drinking and feasting, with women who were not their wives, *cum non suis uxoribus*, but often times with *their own children*; —leading astray the hearts of the innocent, by their insinuating speeches and their  *blessings*. He even applies to them the words of the Apostle to Timothy *Ep. 2. c. 3.* where he speaks of such as *insinuate themselves into families, and captivate weak women that are laden with sins and carried away by various lusts*. “No one, adds this Roman Catholic Doctor, can doubt but this was written of these new Pharisees.” See also the works of S. Bernard himself, in various places: or the writings of the pious Camus Bishop of Bellay, where they are treated with equal severity. The curious reader may consult, the *Desappropriation Clausurale*, the *Rabat-joie du Triomphe monacal*, the *Reclus et L'Instable*, the *Antimoine bien préparé*, &c. which are a few of the many treatises published on that subject, by this zealous prelate.

cious repentance for the errors and failings into which they may unwarily have been led by passion and occasion in their younger days, was not only prejudicial to a right esteem of every *rational* and *allowable* indulgence, but made them even run into a contrary extreme, and consider guilt and pleasure as synonymous.

When one seriously reflects upon these matters, it is really a subject of surprize, that any number of men should ever have been persuaded to renounce the innocent enjoyments of life, for the painful practices of a Monastic profession; and could submit to all the *tyrannical* and *absurd* commands of their superiors, out of a motive of acquiring perfection. I wish I was allowed to qualify these observances with a less severe appellation: But when I read of a Novice, for example, who to give a specimen of his obedience, was ordered to water a dry sapless stick which his Abbot fixed in the ground, till it produced roots and leaves; and who continued this *rational* employment during three whole years, at the expiration of which it began to sprout, and grew up into a tree; and a thousand such puerile histories mentioned by Rosweide in the lives of the fathers of the desert, and in various other compilations of Ecclesiastical Biography; I can scarce express, with sufficient energy, the feelings of my mind. Obedience is, indeed, the fourth *step* in S. John Climacus's scale of virtues, where he defines it "a simple movement by which we act without discernment



ment - - - a voluntary death - - - a voyage which we take while we are asleep - - - and a renouncing of all discernment by a plenitude of discernment." But he had probably forgot that *Rom. 12*, it is stiled a *reasonable* service. Hence it is most unaccountable, that men should think themselves entitled to eternal happiness, because through a blind zeal, a chimerical notion of virtue, and a fullen contempt of the world, they refused to exercise the faculties of rational and sociable beings: And because they devoted their days to comfortless solitude, disturbed with perpetual apprehensions of incurring the displeasure of Heaven by some almost involuntary omission of their duty, amidst the jarring struggles between *natural* passions, and *religious* prejudices. But the persuasion of the sanctity of their state, of the dangerous situation of such as continued to live in the *World*, of the difficulties of saving their souls, even after all their pious endeavours, was often inculcated; and these ideas were daily confirmed by the extraordinary miracles celebrated in the lives of their holy predecessors, and doubtless repeated from mouth to mouth, in these gloomy mansions of ignorance and credulity. See the *dialogues of S. Gregory*, the *lives of the fathers of the desert*, &c. Nor can we any otherwise account for this unfociable spirit which has for so many ages decoyed a considerable portion of mankind into Solitude, in quest of an ideal happiness, which they might have enjoyed with more security

security and equal innocence, in the midst of society.

“ These extravagant tales, says M. Gibbon, *Dec. & fall of the Rom. Emp. vol. 3.* which display the fiction, without the genius, of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals of Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind : they corrupted the evidence of History ; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of Philosophy and Science. Every mode of Religious worship which had been practised by the Saints, every mysterious doctrine which they believed, was fortified by the sanction of divine Revelation . . . .” In another place the same Author justly observes, that “ These unhappy exiles from social life, were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of Superstition. Their mutual resolution was supported by the example of millions of either sex, of every age, and of every rank ; and each proselite who entered the gates of a Monastery, was persuaded that he trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness. - - - The credulous maid was betrayed by vanity to violate the laws of Nature ; and the matron aspired to imaginary perfection, by renouncing the virtues of domestic life. Paula yielded to the persuasive eloquence of Jerom ; and the profane title of Mother-in-law of God, tempted that illustrious widow, to consecrate the virginity of her daughter Eustochium.” See S. Jerom’s extravagant panegyric  
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of Paula, *Tom. 1. pag. 169,--192.*—No wonder such flattering praises from a man who shone so illustrious, should excite thousands to imitate her example, and aspire to the same honours. (a)

But to return, after this long digression, which, however, was not entirely foreign to the subject; notwithstanding all that has been said above, and which seems to place the practice of ecclesiastical Celibacy in no very favourable point of view, yet it is still universally enforced in the Roman Catholic communion. When this law was first imagined to take place, the Church certainly imposed a burdensome precept upon men, who, having never vowed it, were not in any manner obliged to observe it, not being either of divine or apostolic institution. The same also may be said, whenever she renewed the law grown obsolete by disuse. And  
whatever

(a) On the origin, progress, and effects of the monastic life, see the 37 chapter of Mr. Gibbon's third volume, in which this elegant writer has given a pretty just account of this extraordinary institution. The picture is perhaps rather overcharged; and a few expressions in this, as well as in some other parts of his valuable history, may appear somewhat unguarded and harsh: but it is drawn with a masterly hand; and to an impartial observer, exhibits, upon the whole, not an unfair representation of what must have appeared nearly in the same light to all such who have considered it with an unprejudiced and philosophic eye. See also Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiæ. Book 7: Thomassin Discipline de L'Eglise, Tom. 1, Helyot, Hist. des ordres monastiques; Essai Philosophique sur le monachisme, Paris, (Holland) 1775, supposed to be written by M. Linguet; and some further remarks which we shall make in the sequel of this essay, when we come to speak of the present state of the religious orders abroad.*

whatever *merit* there may be in young persons, who voluntarily subscribe to such oppressive laws, *often* through very partial motives, *always* without sufficient knowledge of the extensive duties they undertake; yet, surely, the merit is quickly lost in thousands, who lament, at a later period, the imprudent zeal of their younger inexperienced days. The various evils occasioned by this state of constraint, can never be made up for, by the imaginary excellence of continency: And it is surprising that many, under these circumstances, (I mean of those who never seek to render the yoke less galling, by any *criminal* indulgence;) do not lay aside the supposed obligation, and engage in a married life. But, the force of prejudice is great: And the apprehension of the secular power, of prisons, confinement, and misery, is, no doubt, of greater efficacy to persuade their acquiescence, than all the excommunications and censures they may apprehend. What renders this more striking, is, that, in some *religious* orders, the Benedictin, for example, there is no explicit vow of continency, either required or taken, but merely of *obedience according to the rule*, in which chastity is never mentioned, but as a virtue to be acquired. At the ordination of the *Secular* Clergy, neither vow nor promise is proposed. Hence, at most, it is but an observance enforced by practice, and supported by the general prejudice, because its obligation is never questioned. Some Popes, indeed, have ordered that a formal and explicit



vow should be administered ; yet, whatever be the reason, certain it is, that hitherto this is not the case : and, surely, all will acknowledge that a vow presumed merely as *implied* and *interpretative*, is no vow at all. *Odiosa sunt restringenda*, is a maxim of the Canon law, and in the infliction of penalties, where the letter is not express, the more favourable interpretation always is admitted. How, therefore, can men be obliged, at least under so severe a censure as that of *perjury*, to more than the words import ? Can silence alone, and not objecting to the *advice* a Bishop gives of leading a chaste, or even a continent life, be explained into a positive solemn vow, taken in the face of the church ? such a supposition revolts common sense, and never can be persuaded, till the nature of language changes. In effect, the only passage in the form of ordination appointed by the Roman Ritual, which can be thought to contain any thing relative to this law, is as follows : “ Most dear children who are going to be promoted to the sacred order of Sub-deaconship ; you should again and again consider with attention, what the burden is, which, to-day, of your own accord, you seek. For, hitherto you are free, and, if you please, you may pass to a secular life, *secularia vota* : But if you receive this order, it will be no longer lawful for you to depart from your resolution, but you are to remain perpetually in the service of God, whose service is to reign, *cui servire, regnare est* ; and you must, with his assistance, lead a life of chastity, (litt. *preserve chastity,*



*castitatem servare oportet,*) and he for ever engaged in the Ministry of the Church, *atque in Ecclesiæ ministerio semper esse Mancipatos.* - - - - If hitherto you have been addicted to liquor, *ebriosi*; henceforth you must be sober: If hitherto lewd; henceforth you must be chaste: *si usque nunc inhonesti, amodo casti.*" This is a most literal translation of the speech which is addressed to them by the Bishop on that occasion. Yet upon this slender mention of *Chastity*, and a presumed *implicit intention* of taking an oath, where evidently none is tendered; Collet, a late Divine universally read in the Roman Catholic Seminaries, has not scrupled to affirm that "*the vow taken by Subdeacons is not less solemn, than that which is made by the Regular Clergy: Votum a Subdiaconis emissum, non est minus solemne, nec minus sui traditionem continet, quam quod a Religiosis emittitur.*" And still, the same Author, *ibid. de Voto*, says, that it is probable that Subdeaconship is no Sacrament, and that it was not, in the primitive Church, reckoned amongst the Holy Orders. He even thinks it was not instituted by Christ, and that no promise of grace is annexed thereto.

Let us now suppose, for a moment, that a person should omit to take upon himself any such obligation, by actually *dissenting* in his mind; and thus, not even *virtually* and *interpretatively* acquiescing to the advice of the Bishop: Would any one deny, in such a case, that his orders would still be valid? Yet, surely, no one will presume to say  
that

that he would then be equally bound by vow, as if a vow had been *expressly* made! Hence the Author of the Gloss upon the Decretals of Greg. 9, *Decret. Greg. lib. 3, tit. 3, cap. cum olim.* says, that neither he, nor many other Doctors, could imagine how the Clergy of the Western Church could be said to be obliged by vow to Continence: and all the Councils which commanded a vow to be taken by the Clergy at their ordination *openly* and *in the face of the Church*, seem to have been of the same opinion; or, at least, to have been aware that this might be objected. We read that in the primitive Church, many were ordained against their wills; and Dupin seems to affirm this of the generality of the Clergy, during the three first centuries. It was the case of S. Paulinus, as he tells us himself *Ep. ad Severum, Repentina vi multitudinis correptus, & invitus*: Of S. Germain of Auxerre, who was ordained *invitus, coactus*: of S. Paulinianus, whom S. Epiphanius ordered to be apprehended, and his mouth to be gagged, *per multos diaconos apprehendi jussimus & teneri os ejus*; of Pinianus, a man of quality, who only came upon a visit to S. Augustin An. 411, and was forced into orders much against the will of his wife Melania, who protested with tears against his ordination, See Aug. *Ep. 126 ad Albinam*; and of many others. They were dragged, imprisoned, beset with guards, says this father *Ep. ad Donatum*, till they consented to what the Apostle calls a good work, *donec eis adsit voluntas suscipiendi operis boni*. If, though ordained

by violence, these holy men continued ever after to live in Celibacy, as S. Augustin assures us, *lib. de Adult. conj. cap ult*; no one will, at least, affirm that it was a *duty* so to do. We might as well maintain the same obligation with respect to the *Children* who are frequently ordained in great numbers in the Abyssinian Church: See *Alvar. hist. Æthiop.*; or in regard to the *Infants* who were formerly consecrated by their parents to a Monastic life. Indeed, the 4th Council of Toledo in 633 decreed that whether their parent's devotion, or their own free choice made them Monks, they should be equally bound to persevere: But with what right, it will be somewhat difficult to determine. Besides, it is highly probable, that in case of moral impossibility, that is, of great and evident difficulty, even an express vow of Continency would cease to be binding; as in temporal affairs, no promise is considered to oblige, under a natural impossibility of complying with it. A vow, which in some circumstances may be lawful, or even laudable, may be rendered not so in others, which totally alter the nature of the contract; and when it may be rescinded without prejudice or injury to a third person, it is then, perhaps, even a *duty* to set it aside. Now, in case of violent, though not insuperable temptations, arising from circumstances which human prudence could not foresee, a vow of Continency cannot bind, when by laying it aside, a Christian may attain a greater good, security and peace of mind, and freedom from unruly passions. The expediency of dispensations,

dispensations in such cases is generally allowed; and S. Thom. Aquin. says, 2a, 2æ, q. 88 *Art. 2 in fin.* that “ If any great or manifest inconvenience should arise from the obligation of a vow, and there is no opportunity of recurring to a Superior, a man is not obliged to keep it.” This will, perhaps, be explained of a *simple* vow, of which Bellarm. says, *de Matr. cap. 21.* “ It was never doubted amongst the Catholics, but that a simple vow of Continency is an impediment which hinders marriage from being contracted; but not an impediment which dissolves the contract when once made.” Yet Collet affirms that the *solemnity* of a vow is only of Ecclesiastical appointment, *Voti solemnitas est solum juris Ecclesiastici*: And what can this distinction add to the obligation of a vow in conscience, and in the sight of God? Notwithstanding which, the infallible Council of Trent seems to have determined, that such marriages as are entered upon after a *solemn* vow of Continence, are null and void; while the same contract under a *simple* vow, is universally acknowledged to be valid. What inconsistency! As if the passages in Eccles. the Psalms, Deutonomy, &c. cited on this occasion, are not equally strong against the non-performance of a simple, as of a solemn vow. Besides, the Pope is generally allowed to have power to dispense with the most *solemn* vows of religion, for the common good of the church, or of a kingdom; because *Matt. 18*, it is said, *Whatever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*; which, says



says Collet, are *general terms, et Ecclesie admodum favorabilia*, and very favourable to the authority of the Church." This power has even in some instances been reduced to act; See P. Antoine and Collet. The latter piously observes that it would be very disrespectful, in such cases, to call the authority of the Roman Pontif in question. That the vows of Children under age may be annulled by their *Parents*, if made without their consent, is, I believe, granted by all Roman Catholic Theologians; as well as those of married women, by their *Husbands*: And, what is still more extraordinary, they teach that the most sacred contract of marriage ratified at the foot of the altar (*ratum, non consummatum*) is annulled by the religious profession of either of the two persons, whilst that which remains in the *world*, is permitted to take another partner. Is not this, then, a *solemn* vow? or must we also maintain, with the same writers, that a married person is not bound to admit the embraces of her husband during the two first months after her marriage, that she may have leisure to determine whether she will still remain united to him, or retire into a Monastery? If this latter is her choice, he is obliged patiently to bear her absence during the twelve long months of her noviciate, to know what her final determination will be. If, on the other hand, she chuses to remain in society, and only requires her two months of consideration; however familiarly they may have lived together, *modo ad consummationem usque non fuerit progressum*, yet she is still



at liberty to abandon *him* whom she had espoused in so solemn a manner, by reason of a *more solemn marriage with Christ* in an approved religious order. What ridiculous ideas, does not such casuistry suggest! and how can all this be reconciled either to reason or to religion, by the candid Roman Catholic, however attached in other points, to the discipline of his Church?

Nor, can we, perhaps, produce a single instance where a marriage contracted under these supposed pre-engagements, was ever declared to be *null*, during the first 900 years of the Christian Æra, however esteemed *unlawful*. The council of Chalcedon excommunicated such persons; but did not dissolve their marriage: which shews it was not then esteemed *invalid*. Nor does the sentence of excommunication suppose it in any manner; since many councils, as Aurel. 2. *can* 19; Arvern. *can*. 6; Tolet. 4; Nicen. *can. Arab*; Arelat. 1. &c. excommunicated those Christians who married Jews or Gentiles, and ordered them to be separated. Yet it was never denied but such marriages were perfectly valid. Indeed the validity of the marriage contract in such circumstances, seems almost universally acknowledged; for marriage is a covenant established by God himself, to which every Ecclesiastical institution must give way. Nor is it at all certain, but that even S. Paul 1 *Tim.* 5, ordered that the young widows who, according to several interpreters, had in some manner or other consecrated themselves to God,

God, should marry, in order to retrieve their character. The text may bear this exposition: "Let not, says he, a widow be taken under 60 years of age - - - but refuse younger widows; for when they have been too much at their ease (see Calmet) in the service of Christ, they will marry; wherein they are to be *condemned*, (not *damned*) because they have violated their first engagement, - - - I will, therefore, have the younger ones marry." In this sense was this passage understood by S. Chryostom, (a) Theophylact, (b) and S. Ambrose. (c)

Yet this was, perhaps, not the meaning of the Apostle. Be that as it may: *Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*. It is however certain that these widows of whom he speaks v. 11 and 12, were provided for entirely at the expence of the Church, and had engaged themselves to live in the service of it. We see by v. 5 and 16, that they had no parents of their own, no other maintenance than the alms of the faithful

(a) Speaking of those widows who would marry, and of S. Paul's reflections on them, he says in the person of the Apostle: "Quoniam volunt nubere, volo et ego Juniores nubere . . . . Longe enim præstat hoc facere, quam illa. (*the crimes with which he upbraided them.*) Oportebat quidem curare quæ Dei sunt, oportebat *fidem servare*: quando vero illa non fiunt, melius est hæc fieri, quam illa; quippe viduitas illa nil parit boni."

(b) Ne Diabolus illudat ipsis, quæ cum *Christi sponsæ* essent, factæ sunt adulteræ; ideo eas sub matrimonium duco.

(c) Multum expedit nubere, quam sub bona & pia professione, notabiliter incedere. Sic enim occasionem invenit Satanas, quomodo subvertat animas inconsultas, cum pia utroque versantur.

faithful: If in such circumstances they broke their engagement, to be sure they were very reprehensible (*dignes de condamnation*, says Dom Calmet). They are described v. 13, as guilty, not only of misbehaviour and levity, but of unseemly words; which might justly be accounted scandalous in those who were in a particular manner under the protection of the Church: and this is sufficient to justify the censure pronounced on them by the Apostle, without gratuitously supposing that they were tied by any particular vows; unless we admit that the elderly widows of threescore years, were, in like manner, bound by oath to persevere in a state of Continence. It is really an insult on the judgment of the reader, to urge such groundless surmises as incontestible arguments in favour of institutions which were never heard of for ages after. Others explain this passage of such as cast off the Religion they had newly embraced, and returned to Paganism or to the Jewish worship, by reason of their marrying Jewish or Gentile husbands; and who had thus violated the *faith* they had pledged at their conversion, as well as the duties to which they had engaged themselves. And, surely, in these days of pure morality, no *Christian* would have married them without the recommendation either of a good fortune, or of a virtuous conduct.

That this Doctrine was held by the most learned and best among the Fathers, seems evident from several passages in their writings, which are

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very exprefs; fuch as thofe of Clem. Alexand. *Strom.* l. 1. S. Cyprian. *Ep.* 62 *ad Pompon.* &c. S. Epiphanius, *hær.* 61, fpeaking of thofe who after a vow of Continence and undertaking a Monaftic life, find themfelves violently tempted, gives this advice: “ It is better to commit one fin” by violating the vow, (for if there was no vow, there was no fin) “ than many:” by indulging a wandering luft. “ It is better for him who cannot perform his undertaking (*Ubi a curriculo exciderit*), openly to marry a wife according to the law.” (a) S. Cyprian *lib.* 1, *epift.* 11, teaches nearly the fame doctrine. (b) S. Auguft. *de bono vid.* c. 10, fays, “ No fmall evil arifeth from this inconfiderate opinion of the invalidity of the marriage of holy Virgins who quit their profeflion (*Lapsarum a fancto propofito fæminarum*): for hereby wives are feparated from their hufbands, as if they were adultereffes, not wives. And they who would, by feparating them, reduce them to Continence, make their hufbands become true adulterers, if while thefe are alive, they marry other wives.” Again; as to “ thofe (consecrated Virgins) who long to marry and yet do not marry, becaufe they cannot do it with impunity, it is better they fhould marry, than burn; that is, be fcorched with

(a) In another place the fame Father fays: “ Peccato fe et Judicio implicat quisquis dei virginitatem tollit e medio . . . . Qui virginitatem corruperit, corona præmioque repellitur: verum melius Judicium eft quam damnatio.”

(b) Quod fi ex fide fe Chriſto dicaverint, publice & caſte perfeverent. Si autem perfeverare nolunt, aut non poſſunt, melius eft nubere, quam ut in ignem deliciis ſuis cadant.



with the secret flames of lust, when they repent of their profession, and are grieved at their promise." *Lib. de san. Virgin. c. 24. (a)*. S. Jerom writing to a consecrated Virgin who lived with an unmarried Clergyman, and was suspected to entertain an improper familiarity with him, adviseth her either to return to her mother, or to marry, *Epist. 47 de vitando suspecto contub.*; and one would imagine that in such circumstances, she could be advised to marry no other than the Priest himself. "Si Virgo es, quid times diligentem custodiam; si corrupta, cur non palam nubis? Secunda post naufragium tabula est; quod male cæperis, saltem hoc remedio temperare." The Council of Ancyra in 314 decreed that those who, having vowed Virginity, falsified their promise, should be placed in the *rank of Bigamists*. Was Bigamy then also criminal? Leo I. ordained, *Ep. 92, ad Rustic. Narbon.* that a Monk who married should expiate his fault by public penance, because *though marriage were honest,*

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yet

(a) Damnantur tales, says he, non quia conjugalem fidem posterius inierunt, sed quia continentiae primam fidem irritam fecerunt. This appears evidently to have been his opinion, from various expressions in the 9th and 10th chapters, where he affirms that, "non ipsæ nuptiæ vel talium damnandæ judicantur, sed damnatur fracti voti fides." Now if Roman Catholics agree that *the solemnity of a vow is only of ecclesiastical appointment*, it is of little moment whether these virgins were bound by a simple, or by a solemn vow. We see that, whether they had actually fallen, or merely had reasons to repent of their profession, yet he advises them to marry. And if he granted this indulgence to such as had already violated their engagement; he would, surely, not have been more severe on those who entered on the marriage state with a view of preserving their Integrity.



yet it was a crime to forsake the better choice. Ivo, Bishop of Chartres in the 11th age, the greatest Canonist of the times, relates that a Prebendary of the Church of Paris contracted marriage; and maintains that this marriage neither could, nor ought to be dissolved. *Ep.* 218. In the 12th age, Gratian, the compiler of the Canon law now in use, *Dist.* 27 *cap.* 1, expressly asserts the validity of such marriages. "If a Deacon, says he, will lay down his office, he may lawfully use marriage when once contracted: for although he made a vow of chastity at his ordination, yet so great is the sacrament of marriage, that not even by the violation of the vow can the marriage be dissolved." In the 15th age Æneas Silvius, afterwards Pope Pius the 2d, being desired, when Cardinal of Sienna, by a Priest of his acquaintance, to obtain from Rome a dispensation for him to marry, returned for answer, that the Pope refused to grant his request. But we may easily see what were the sentiments of this learned man, from what he tells his friend *Epist.* 307. "I acknowledge you do not act imprudently, if, when you cannot contain, you seek to marry; although that ought to have been considered before you entered into holy orders: But we are not all Gods to see into futurity. Seeing the case is so that you can no longer resist the law of the flesh, it is better to marry than to burn." Many other testimonies might be added of the same import: Let these suffice. Hence when S. Chrysostom, in his letter to Theodorus the Monk who was resolved to marry the beautiful  
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Hermione, dissuaded him from it in such vehement terms; he spoke with more zeal than judgment, and played the friend and orator, more than the Canonist and Theologian. For as the vow of Theodorus was, at most, but a *simple* vow (see S. Basil *Ep. canon. c. 19*, and S. Athanas. *Ep. ad Dracontium*); If he taught that his marriage would not be *valid*, he contradicted the opinion of many ages, councils, and Theologians. We should form the same judgment of this piece of rhetoric, as we must of several other Panegyrics of some of the fathers upon virginity; wherein they were more intent upon persuading integrity of life, or confuting some particular errors in those whose opinions they combated, than in establishing the exact truth. (a)

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(a) We may apply to them what S. Basil says, *Ep. 41* of Dionysius Alexandrinus, where he accuses him of having advanced some erroneous doctrines, in the heat of his disputes against Sabellius. “Soleo ipsum assimilare arborum insitori, qui dum novellæ plantæ incurvum statum vult corrigere, nimia attractione a medio aberrat, & in contrariam partem nimium deflectendo peccat.” The same observation may be made, in great measure, on the chief controvertists of every age, and every nation. A man of Candour who sincerely seeks for truth, cannot read without disgust and an honest indignation, the various treatises that have been written upon the many points which are controverted amongst Christians. The dispute is generally carried on in the most unjustifiable manner, and every unfair mean is used to advance what is often, on either side, abusively termed the cause of truth, since it is too frequently that of prejudice and pride. The opponents reciprocally charge each other with false quotations, forgeries, misrepresenting facts, or erroneous versions of the originals from whence they produce their authorities; nor can it be denied but these mutual recriminations are often made with much justice. It would be easy to instance this  
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It may, perhaps, be urged as a sentiment held by most Roman Catholic Divines (though strenuously denied by others), that the Pope has power, when occasion requires, to dispense with the most *solemn* vows of Religion or of Continence: but this power is, confessedly, *seldom* reduced to act; because those who most stand in need of such dispensations, have *seldom* protection or money enough to obtain them. For, whatever be the reason, it is a fact that no favour can be obtained

in a variety of examples, especially from those polemical writings which appeared, in so great abundance, about the time of the Reformation. I shall content myself with referring to the *Britannomachia* by Henry Fitz Simon, an Irish Jesuit, printed at Doway, An. 1614; Chraſtovius's *Bellum Jesuiticum*, printed at Basil, by Vralckirchius; and, to cite a more recent work, the *Lettres Provinciales*, that elegant Libel of the Great Pascal: for even *Saints*, on these occasions, are nearly upon a level with Sinners. And in reality, when we coolly reflect on this matter, we must confess that no controversy of the nature of those of which we are speaking, can ever be determined by mere authority. For there is nothing almost in nature, no opinion however extravagant, that might not be proved by the same method. This is so true, that the Scholastic disputants in foreign universities frequently support their opposite opinions by quotations from the same fathers: which evidently shews, moreover, that it is by no means evident what their real opinion was in many points. It were therefore much better if we always had recourse to Scripture, and observed that rule laid down by St. Austin *Contra Maxim. lib. 3. c. 14.* "Sed nunc nec ego Nicænum, nec tu debes Ariminense, tanquam præjudicaturus proferre concilium. Nec ego hujus auctoritate, nec tu illius detineris: Scripturarum auctoritatibus, non quorumcunque propriis, sed utriusque communibus testibus, res cum re, causa cum causa, ratio cum ratione concertet."

tained at Rome without money. (a) Thus, for want of friends and riches, a person unfortunately engaged

(a) This is a point which, though strictly true in the sense in which I have affirmed it, has often been greatly misrepresented. It is ridiculous in the highest degree to suppose it ever was the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church that the Pope could, for a sum of money, grant them leave to commit sin; or that a Christian, without the proper dispositions of heart, could ever obtain forgiveness in the sight of Heaven in consideration of these donations. But as the absolution from certain crimes is, according to the Roman Catholic discipline, reserved to the Pope, in order to render the commission of them less frequent, because the absolution from them in the Ecclesiastical Court (*in foro externo*) is attended with so many difficulties; a certain fine is imposed by way of penance: and was, perhaps, originally intended rather as an offering to the poor, than a compensation for the scandal supposed to have been given. The obtaining any grant or dispensation leads also to great expences in this, as well as in every other Court. The officers in various departments must be maintained; and some allowances should be made for abuses which will creep in wherever there are men, and which it is much more easy to remark, than either to prevent or to abolish. With respect to those who apply for favours, which may be considered merely as such, and which they have no right to demand, much may, perhaps, be said in defence of this civil constitution. Those who seek to obtain peculiar *privileges*, have no reason to complain, if they are subjected to some pecuniary mulcts, in order to attain the completion of their wishes. But with regard to other cases, where the *happiness* of a fellow Christian is concerned, they should certainly dispense gratis, what they are *supposed* gratuitously to have received, Matt. 8. Indeed, during the reign of John XXII, certain dispensations and taxes were invented, that were a scandal to Christianity, and an insult upon common sense. The book wherein these rates were settled has been frequently reprinted, and exposes to deserved shame those scandalous monopolies. The best edition of it is that of 1564, in 8vo. But we should remember at what time it was compiled, and by whose orders. John XXII was so fond of money, that by claiming to himself the re-  
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engaged in a clerical or religious state, by the ambitious views of parents, or through the prejudices of an injudicious education, must remain for ever unhappy and without resource. As if the happiness of an individual, or the salvation of a soul for which Christ underwent so much, were not as good a motive in the eyes of the Almighty, as the keeping, for example, one particular family on the throne, or any other similar pretences:

Again, it will be said, that in cases where fear or any kind of constraint has influenced a young person to embrace such a calling, he is allowed five years wherein he may reclaim against this violence, and the engagements entered upon in consequence of it. But this, in effect, is of no service, in cases where such dispensations are chiefly wanted: for the difficulty there is in judicially proving such a constraint, the apprehension of applying to the Bishop's Court, the ignorance of the steps necessary to

serve of all the Prebends in the Church, of almost all the Bishoprics, the revenues of every vacant Benefice, and such like arts he is said to have left in his treasury, at his death, three hundred and fifteen thousand pounds worth of plate and jewels, and more than eight hundred thousand pounds in specie. See the Chronicle of Villani, printed at Venice in three vols. 4to. in 1559, 1562, and 1581. With what right all this power of *granting*, or of *reserving*, however limited, is assumed by the Roman Pontiffs, is foreign to the question; but we must allow a Roman Catholic to argue consistently with his own principles, which admit, in some degree, of such an authority. If we esteem these erroneous, we are at liberty to adopt a more rational system. But every man has a right to be treated with fair dealing; and we should rest the *cause* of truth, on the *evidence* of truth alone.

to be taken on such occasions; and the opposition which would be formed by those on whom such an appeal might seem to reflect, reduce this, nearly, to a speculative remedy. Besides, a person who was engaged for life, when his infant years were scarce elapsed (*a*), before his judgment was ripened to discern good from evil, while he was yet unacquainted both with himself, and with the world, may have reasons in a more mature age, which did not exist before: And this was, surely, the reason why the Apostle would not have the church-widows make a promise of Continency, till they had reached their sixtieth year, *Vidua eligatur non minus sexaginta annorum*. In every circumstance, however, if an application may be admitted within five years, why not during a space of time unlimited, but by the necessities of the subject? for against a right which nature, reason, and religion give him, surely there can be no prescription.

Perhaps it may be further observed, that *summum jus, summa est injuria*, the greatest injustices sometimes arise from the most equitable laws; that every law cannot extend to each particular circumstance that may happen; that difficulties may occur even in the unchangeable state of marriage, though this

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(*a*) Till some late edicts of the King of France, children were admitted to the *noviciate* in religious orders, at the age of fifteen; and were solemnly and irrevocably *professed*, in about a twelvemonth after. This is the discipline of the council of Trent: that of Agde (*Agathense*) in 506, *Can.* 19, forbad the veil to be given to religious women, till they were forty.

can never be dissolved. But I answer to this reflection ; that there is an essential difference between the institutions of men, and the immutable laws of God. In these, no human power can dispense : In those, were such a power to exist, it would be the highest abuse if a dispensation were not granted, not according to the interest, or wealth, but, according to the wants of individuals. I said, *were such a power to exist* : for it is founded only upon that obscure quotation from the Evangelist, “ whatever you shall loose on Earth, shall also be loosed in Heaven.” Thus does this text, which, on other occasions, is introduced to prove that Christ left power to his ministers to remit sins, serve every purpose, according to the sense in which it is desired to have been spoken. When such fanciful applications are admitted, there is no doctrine upon Earth, which may not be discovered in the sacred writings, by some expositor, or other. See Collet, and his edition of Pontas in 2 vol. 4to.

To reduce all this to a general view ; if we turn back to the annals of history, we shall find that the pretended Celibacy of the Clergy for the two first centuries, is, perhaps, a mere fiction of those who wish to prove its existence ; that it was proposed by some in the third, preconised in the fourth, and in a few places enjoined in the fifth : that it was no where universally practised ; but that marriage of one kind or other, pretty generally prevailed till the eleventh age. That then, the decrees made

made by the Popes and Councils to introduce it, met with universal opposition : that it never was entirely admitted in the Eastern Church ; and probably, never would have been adopted any where, had it not been the only road to Ecclesiastical preferment. The arguments that are adduced in its favour, by the principal abettors of it, are founded upon error, and the most unwarrantable prejudices ; and the persisting in so unjustifiable a law, has both filled the Church with scandals, and undermined the happiness of Society. In short, as the excellent Cassander, a Roman Catholic controvertist who died in 1566, a man who had no other passion, according to the authors of the Historical Dictionary printed at Caen in 1779, than that of knowing the truth, and no desire but that of propagating it, observes : “ The reasons whereby the ancients were induced to make this constitution, are not only ceased at present ; but are even become opposite. ---- By this decree, Chastity and Continence are so far from being promoted amongst the Clergy, that thereby a door is opened to every species of uncleanness and villany.”

With regard to the practice of the Church in the two first centuries, we have so few monuments left, that it is impossible to produce many evidences on either side of the question. Yet Clement of Alexandria says l. 3, Strom. “ The Apostle approveth the husband of one wife, whether he be a Priest, a Deacon, or a Layman, if he useth his marriage

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unblameably :



unblameably; “Quin et unius quoque uxoris virum utique admittit, (Apostolus,) seu sit Presbiter, seu Diaconus, seu Laicus, utens matrimonio citra reprehensionem:” than which, nothing can be more express. And, again, “What will those who condemn marriage, say to these precepts, since the Apostle commandeth him to preside over the Church in quality of Bishop, who governeth his own house well: and the marriage of one wife, representeth the Church of Christ.” Surely not of a wife whom he had abandoned! (a)

Pinytus, a Bishop of Gnosus in Crete, about 170, had, indeed, under pretence of greater purity and perfection, endeavoured to impose Celibacy on his *Clergy*; but Dionysius, the famous Bishop of Corinth, represented to him the injustice of this attempt, and he acquiesced to his advice. See Euseb. l. 4. c. 23, and Rufinus. The words of the original, are, his *Brethren*; yet as he was a pious and *orthodox* Bishop, not infected with the errors of the times, it would be preposterous to imagine that this regarded the Laity. Tertullian Presbiter of Carthage, is allowed by all to have been married. In his advice to his wife, *Ad Uxorem l. 1. Prope fin.* he exhorts her to continue unmarried

(a) On the text of the Apostle *Ephes. v. 32* which is here alluded to, Erasmus observes, that “If there had been in nature any thing more sacred than the marriage bond, a more holy covenant; the simile would have been taken from thence: But, says he, “The Apostle, on this occasion extolls the bed undefiled; and never makes the least mention of Celibacy.” *De Ep. Conf. c. 47.*

married after his death, “ to perform in widowhood, what she could not do when married ; -- and to embrace the opportunity of leading a single life, as soon as it should present itself. *Facultatem continentiae, quamprimum obveniret, imbibamus,*” which clearly shews that she did not live in Continency before. Amongst the articles of misdemeanor of which S. Cyprian accused Donatus, one is, that he kicked his wife during her state of pregnancy, and caused her to miscarry : Yet he never censured him for cohabiting with her, which, if it had been esteemed a crime, was a charge he probably would not have omitted. See *Ep. 52. ad Cornelium*. In short, Choëremon Bishop of Nile, S. Cyprian himself, and many other holy men of the same age, continued to live with their wives ; and we have no proofs that they abstained from the use of marriage.

Indeed, Celibacy and the merits of a continent life began to be extolled in the 3d age, through the unenlightened zeal of the Catholics, as well as in opposition to the errors of the Heretics. Most of these, as the Nicolaites, Cerinthians, the followers of Saturninus, Carpocrates, Marcion, Tatian, &c. censured the marriage state under one pretence or other, and held it to be unclean. Many even rejected it as totally unlawful, and for much the same reasons that are used to exalt a state of Celibacy, by some of the ancient fathers, who in this point, were certainly misled by the specious ideas of perfection,  
ascribed

ascribed to that state, by those who affected to rise above the vulgar, and pretended to greater purity.

(a) The Montanists contented themselves with rejecting the lawfulness of *second* marriages; but the Priscillianists, though said to be guilty of all the abominations of the Gnostics, detested the state in general, because, as Pope Leo observes *Ep. 93. ad Turrib.* “there is no liberty for uncleanness, where the chastity of the nuptial bed, and the hope of posterity is preserved.” Thus, the glorious pretence of extraordinary purity gained the Heretics the applause of the multitudes, who only judged

(a) We have still, unfortunately, in the world, a certain set of men who with a view of gaining the appellation of *Philosophers*, affect on all occasions, to despise the society of women. Yet as these are chiefly such as have been connected with the more worthless part of the sex, and have, perhaps deservedly, become their dupes, they are, certainly, very inadequate judges of their merit: a presumption which their private conduct too frequently justifies. Those, who have been more cautious or more fortunate in their connections, have reason to consider them in a very different light; and know that many of them are not less aimable for the qualities of their hearts, than estimable for the solidity of their understanding. If women had the benefit of liberal instructions, the advantages of learned conversation, and, in short, were indulged from their infancy with the same opportunities of improvement which the other sex enjoys; they would, perhaps, be found equally capable of every intellectual attainment. The ingenuity and erudition of a Dacier, a Du Chatelet, a Macaulay, a Carter, an Aikin, &c. &c. &c. will always be acknowledged and admired in the republic of letters.

History furnishes us with many instances of women who have shone with peculiar lustre in every department of life, and who have given the most evident proofs, that they were possessed of the most superior talents, as well as of the most real and heroic virtues: and these examples would be much more common, if our methods of education were less preposterous.

judged of their outward pretensions, and knew not the corruptions of their secret practice. But experience has proved that every pretence to excessive virtue, degenerates, for the most part, into real vice. Those only who adhere to the pure simplicity of the Gospel, are ever likely to attain to the perfection which it teaches. Yet such motives as these first recommended Celibacy to the world, and we shall see in the sequel, in what manner prejudice and error have been perpetuated. It is somewhere justly observed by the Monthly Reviewers, that "Most men are the dupes of other mens passions. From partial motives, they imbibe principles which they have not strength of mind to eradicate; and, being deceived themselves, they industriously and innocently endeavour to mislead others. The best of men are most exposed to the pernicious effects of prejudice, and are most obstinate in defence of mistaken principles. Unless they are endued with more than common force of understanding to counteract their zeal, their very virtues will contribute to deceive them. When erroneous positions are once adopted by heads of parties and leading men, it is an arduous task to undeceive the multitude. As their own free reflections, and unbiassed reason are not the primary sources whence they draw their conclusions; they are, consequently, bewildered in argument, and lost in a labyrinth of which they have not the clue. Thus opinion, in them, frequently becomes a matter of faith."



In this manner did Celibacy gain footing in the Church, and none dared to step in, and undeceive mankind; lest by the prejudiced many they should be considered as enemies to perfect virtue, or actuated only by their private passions. The fathers in general, for we should not dwell on some few fanatic expressions into which we have seen them hurried, maintained the dignity and purity of the married state: But in order to stem the torrent of depravity and corruption which universally prevailed, ran into the opposite extreme, and were injudiciously lavish of their encomiums on Celibacy.<sup>(a)</sup> They found themselves, on many occasions, obliged to adopt even the language that Heresy assumed in public, to oppose the immorality which was countenanced in its practice. Thus, unwarily led on by controversial zeal, they often advanced assertions in their writings, which being considered afterwards in an abstract light, without attending to the circumstances of the times, were misapplied, because misapprehended. The Regular Clergy, in defence of their own retired and single lives, reechoed in after ages whatever had been advanced in favor of Continency, and contributed not a little, to establish an extravagant veneration for it. For, when the fabulous legends which recorded the many miracles wrought in  
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(a) "Donetur hic error temporibus, says Erasmus: let us attribute this over-great zeal to the times in which they lived. At present, we had much better employ our Rhetoric in delineating an aimable picture of the marriage state, when preserved pure and undefiled."

support of this opinion (and which are now as little credited by sensible men in Roman Catholic, as in Protestant countries) were read, and repeated till they gained belief; we cannot be surprised that young and thoughtless votaries of either sex should be enamoured with a state to which such supernatural privileges seemed attached. Nor can it be sufficiently lamented, that these same fictions are still too much encouraged in convents of both sexes in foreign countries. They are, indeed, treated by many with the contempt and ridicule they deserve: but Rosweide, Ribadeneira, Jerom Porter, and such other romantic collections are daily put into the hands of the children, to whom they can prove of no other benefit than to deprave their taste, corrupt their judgment, give them a false idea of religion, and implant in their tender minds such prejudices as no time or future reflections are often sufficient to eradicate. (a)

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(a) It is a lamentable consideration, that most young persons form even their system of belief, from the books which their instructors in early life have put into their hands, or from such superficial treatises of controversy to which chance has directed them; and are seldom taught to think for themselves. Hence so few are able to give a rational account of *that hope which is in them*. The *essential* points of the Christian doctrine are few, and evident: "Non omnia quæ dominus scit, scripta sunt, says S. Cyril *l. 12 in Joan.* sed quæ scriptæ sunt, tum ad mores, tum ad dogmata putarunt sufficere." And it is often a dangerous thing to be but partially acquainted with what has been urged on other parts of it, by writers of different persuasions. Infidelity, and universal scepticism are, not unfrequently, the consequences of these ill directed enquiries; and by too close an attention to the less important doctrines

From these refined notions which were entertained of the supereminence of Virginity, and the methods adopted to perpetuate these conceits, marriage itself insensibly fell into disrepute. However, when the numbers of unmarried persons of both sexes increased, so did the general depravation of manners, as may be seen in Ecclesiastical history, in

doctrines and duties of Religion, we are easily induced to neglect such as are most essential. Whereas, those who adhere to that alone which is clearly revealed in the scriptures, although they may sometimes err in speculative points, are much more likely, upon the whole, both to enjoy the comforts which Religion promises her votaries, and to practise the virtues which she recommends. Nor can I see any advantage there is in transferring the infallibility of the word of God revealed to us in the sacred writings, to the Pope, or to the Church, as is done by the Roman Catholics; since these will always be equally liable to be misunderstood in their decisions. Whatever is conveyed in human language, will necessarily be susceptible of various interpretations. This system, therefore, only shifts the difficulty, without solving it. Thus, for instance; the present learned and pious Bishop of Boulogne maintains, with many other Roman Catholic Divines, that in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the *matter* of the bread remains after consecration; although Bellarmine affirms that this sentiment is heretical, and was condemned by the 4th General Council of Latran. The Council of Trent defines that the *whole substance* of the bread is converted into the Body of Christ: But, Mr. Lengrand, who finds a difficulty in admitting this in the obvious meaning of the words, in his treatise *De accidentibus absolutis*, explains its decree by the following salvo; "Id omne convertitur, quod converti potest, porro materia converti nequit, cum destinatum tantum per annihilationem:" and asserts that the *matter* must essentially remain, and cannot be destroyed but by annihilation. In which case, there would be no change at all, but an entire new creation. These are the perplexities in which we must necessarily be involved, when we abandon the simple, uniform, and coherent doctrine of the Scriptures,



in the writings of S. Cyprian, and others. S. Chrysostom tells us that in his time, the greater part of those who embraced a state of Continence, were Virgins only in name. "They are, says he, perpetually laughing and toying, and lead the most luxurious lives. - - - They shut themselves up with men, and seek to engage their love, &c." And even insinuates that it was often necessary to call in Midwives to their assistance. If the virgins of

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*Alexandria,*

for the quibbling hypotheses of Theologians. Thus, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, of which so plain an account is given by the Evangelists, has been so obscured by the comments of Controvertists, that various *orthodox* writers of the same communion, appear, frequently, to entertain very different ideas concerning it. The doctrine of *Transubstantiation* seems not insinuated in the Gospel, nor in the writings of the Apostles: It is, certainly, contrary to reason, which is totally bewildered in the consideration of the difficulties which arise from this belief; and, though several passages in the ancient fathers, may seem to countenance the real and substantial presence of Christ in this commemoration of his passion; yet there are as many others which are full as conclusive for the opposite sentiment, and which prove, with equal evidence, that they always spoke merely of a presence of union, efficacy, and grace. See the writings of Albertinus, Usher, and Claude, in his reply to M. Arnaud's *Perpétuité de la foi*. It would, doubtless, be highly injudicious to embrace, without examen, the assertions of any men, the best of whom are fallible: but some credit is surely due to the sentiments of these two last mentioned writers, who are allowed by all parties to have been equally estimable for their erudition and talents, as for their integrity and the purity of their manners. Hence, whatever the Doctrine of Roman Catholics is, concerning the Eucharist; it must solely rest upon the infallibility of their Church which teaches it. For if we consult our reason, their system can never be admitted; and if they have recourse to authority, they can, in reality, boast, with as little truth, of having that on their side, at least during the first thousand years of the Christian Era.



*Alexandria, of all the East, and of Africa, of whom S. Ambrose says, lib. de virginit. c. 6. "There are not so many persons born here, as there are virgins consecrated there,"* were equally dissolute; it were greatly better they had been engaged in marriage. "They had yet no Grates nor Convents, says M. Linguet: but these early abuses either proved the want of some enclosures, or the indiscretion of those engagements which rendered them necessary."

How all this can recommend the present practice of the Roman Catholic Church, which still admits, encourages, or compels such numerous votaries to a life of Celibacy, we cannot easily conceive. The frequent persecutions, about the third age, rendered a single life desirable to many Christians, especially Priests, who were hourly exposed to martyrdom: but this was no precedent to be alledged in other times. Yet when once the boundaries of reason are transgressed, there is no telling where enthusiasm will stop. Accordingly, we find that it often happened, that upon such weak pretences, persons who were married, presumed to put away their wives. It was this abuse which we find censured so severely in one of the Apostolic Canons, which says: "Let no Bishop, Priest, or Deacon put away his wife on pretence of Religion; if he doth, let him be excommunicated:" and it is both ludicrous, and contrary to the evident import of the words, to suppose that this was only pronounced against those who refused to give them maintenance.

However,

However, in opposition to such as, in any sense, held that marriage was unclean, we may cite all those councils which permitted even the use of it to Deacons and Priests, after the reception of holy orders: as the sixth general council *Can. 6*, and that of Angra in 314, which decreed, that if Deacons yet unmarried declared at the time of their ordination their intention of taking a wife - - - they might after their ordination be allowed to marry, and continue in their office. Nay Aristenus *Comment. in Can. 6, Con. 6*, maintains, that this permission was extended to Priests, if they had not neglected to make their protestation; till it was recalled by the Quinisext council in 692. Hence, in the famous council of Nice in 325, when it was proposed to enact a law that Bishops, Priests, and Deacons who were married before their ordination, should not cohabit with their wives; Paphnutius, an Ægyptian Bishop who had always lived in Celibacy, vigorously declaimed against it, saying, "So heavy a burthen was not to be laid upon the Clergy: that the marriage bed was honourable - - - that conjugal society, was chastity, &c." and the whole council acceded to his advice. See Socrates, Sozomen, Nicephorus, Suidas, Cassiodorus *hist. tripart*, and others. Dupin, *Bibliot. vol. 2*, says, that some question the truth of this story: but adds, that they rather do it lest it might prejudice the present discipline, than from any solid proof they have of it. See also the Council of Gangra, and that of Neocæsarea *Can. 8*. And Socrates says *lib. 5*,

8. 22. that even in his time, in the Eastern Church, many eminent Bishops begat children of their lawful wives; and such as abstained, did it not by obligation of any law, but of their own voluntary choice.

It was the neglect of this rule, and the imposition of Celibacy which was required in some provinces, that gave rise to the greatest abuses that can be conceived; emasculation, and housekeepers, or *subintroductæ*. Of the first we have examples in Origen, Leontius who made himself an eunuch to avoid suspicion in his connections with the virgin Eustochium, and others: See S. Basil *de vera Virg.* As to the *housekeepers* of both sexes, they were persons introduced into the families of the unmarried Clergy, or of Virgins who professed Continence, under the specious pretences either of *Spiritual*, or of *Domestic* assistance. But their behaviour was often so scandalous, as to give just offence to all sober and modest Christians. For they not only dwelt together in the same house, but lay in the same apartment, and sometimes in the same bed, indulging themselves in the closest familiarities, save only the more intimate privileges of the conjugal state. “Whence came these Prostitutes, says S. Jerom *Ep. 22. ad Eustochium*, who are tied to the company of one man (*meretrices univiræ*)? They often make use of the same bed, and yet they call us unreasonably suspicious, if we think any thing amiss.” In effect, they openly maintained all this to be lawful, and thought it not injurious either to their profession of Continence,

nence, or to the integrity of their chastity. These were the scandals forbidden by the Councils of Eliberis, Ancyra, Nice, 2 of Arles; 1, 3, and 4 of Carthage, Lerida, 3d of Constantinople, and others; enormities we should scarcely credit; were it not for these authorities, and because we find them related, in such direct terms, by S. Cyprian, *Ep. 62, ad Pomponium*, S. Greg. Naz. *Carm. de Virgin.* and S. Chrysostom. Such were the fruits of that veneration for Celibacy, which we observe in many writers of the first ages. Tertullian a man of ardent genius, severe and rigid to enthusiasm, carried this idea so far as even to condemn second marriages amongst the Laity: as if the reasons which could be produced in favour of a former, did not often make as strongly for a second contract. But, misled by an illusory conceit which has engrossed his mind, he used all his wit and eloquence to debase, at least by indirect insinuations, the dignity of Marriage, and extol the merits of a single life. The extraordinary reverence which was justly paid to his great learning, and apparent zeal, greatly contributed to sanctify these prejudices; for the multitude, and that term is very comprehensive, is led more by specious appearances, than by sober truth. Even those amongst the fathers who saw the abuse made by the orthodox of these declamations of Heretics, rather promoted the illusion, because it tended in some degree to encourage purity of manners: and many, by accustoming their minds to be familiar with these  
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more plausible doctrines of the Encratites, and Gnostics, at length adopted them themselves. Thus was error countenanced, even through a love of integrity and virtue. Hence Athenagoras, *legat. Chris.* stiles a second marriage, an innocent adultery : S. Augustin *de bono Viduit. c. 11*, says, “ Non illas a te damnatas esse velim, sed spretas : I would not have you condemn second marriages, but despise them.” Tertullian wrote whole books against them. S. Jerom *Ep. 11*, says that those who married a second time were unworthy to partake of the alms of the Church. And when S. Austin desired Pope Gregory to give him some instructions for his new *Converts* in England, he sent him, amongst others, this rule of discipline, (see Bede *Hist. Eccles. l. 1, c. 27*) : “ A man after he hath lain with his wife, ought not to enter the Church till he hath washed himself with water ; nor even immediately then.” Is this the *torum immaculatum*, the *undefiled bed*, of the Apostle ? What can be more directly contrary to the pure ideas which Christians should entertain of this chaste and sacred institution, so much cried up on other occasions, as representing the union of Christ with his Church ? But when men have once wandered from the plain paths of truth, into what absurdities are they not Exposed to be led !

Yet, after all, we never find that marriage was forbidden to Priests, even after their ordination, in the Eastern Church, before the provincial Council  
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of Neocæsarea in 314; nor was this Canon ratified for ages after. The very prohibition of it in this province, shews what was often the *practice* both in this, and in others. And when the *Heterodox* opinion of some uncleanness in the marriage state, began, about this time, to prevail so far amongst some whose zeal was not *according to science*, that they even refused to receive the Sacraments from the hands of those Priests who had wives; The Council of Gangra was obliged to enact the following Canon: "If any one separates himself from a married Priest, as if it were unlawful to communicate, when he officiates; let him be Anathema." Now, if these Priests had not continued to *live* with their wives, such zealots could have had no pretence for their scruples.

As to the Council of Eliberis in 305; its decree imports, that Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and *all the Clergy placed in the Ministry*, should abstain from their wives. But this could only mean a temporary separation, otherwise this clause would be totally superfluous; since by the nature of their office, the Clergy were always *in the Ministry*: although they were not always in the actual exercise of their functions. It would also prove an obligation of Continence, even with respect to the inferior Clergy; which, I believe, no one has ever pretended. Besides, if it were to be understood of a total separation, how could S. Paphnutius have afterwards objected to this, in the Council of Nice, as to *a new unheard-of*

law, as is related by those who have written an account of that Council? How could the great Osius who presided at the Council of Nice, and had been present at that of Eliberis, have permitted this innovation in discipline proposed by a venerable Bishop, to pass by unnoticed?—See also the eighth Canon of the Council of Neocæsarea, which allowed the same indulgence.(a)

In 385, Pope Siricius endeavoured to enforce the practice of Celibacy under pain of deposition; but his preface to his constitution shews, in express terms, that the use of marriage was then very common amongst the Clergy: and in his address to the Bishops of Africa, who were less dependent on the Roman See, and seemingly, did not admit his jurisdiction, he only says; “*I exhort, advise, admonish, and intreat*, that Priests and Deacons may not cohabit with their wives.” And S. Ambrose, though he persuaded Continence to his Clergy, yet acknowledges that, in remoter places, the Clergy *begat children*, even after they were Deacons, and Priests;

(a) We have now in view to relate only what was determined in these several early Synods, with respect to the subject on which we are treating: but were we to collect all the ridiculous and unjust decrees made in some of these assemblies; it would afford no small matter of surprise. What animosities, dissensions, and confusion frequently prevailed in them, we may see in the writings of S. Gregory Naz. *de vita sua* Tom. 2, and in every writer of Ecclesiastical history. They were often carried on by open cabal and violence; and the *Holy Fathers* sometimes proceeded to such indelicate demonstrations of passion as were very unbecoming, and can give us but a mean opinion of the authority of their decrees.

Priests; "And this they defend, says he, by ancient custom." Had we now the arguments they used, this controversy would, probably, appear in a clearer light.

Various Councils held about this time, as those of Toledo, Carthage, &c. seem, in their decrees, to forbid the use of marriage to the superior Clergy; but only on some particular occasions. And it is certain that Helvidius, Jovinian, and Vigilantius, though we are not well acquainted with their particular opinions, appeared in defence of matrimony; and amidst some errors, maintained many solid truths, in opposition to the prejudices of the times. In some points they doubtless held extraordinary notions, which they perhaps supported with reprehensible obstinacy; but we cannot entirely credit the account which is given to us of them by S. Jerom, who was their professed adversary. For besides that we know how much he has misrepresented his once dear Rufinus; the acknowledgments he made in some of his retractations, must greatly invalidate his testimony on other occasions. Neither is it wonderful that he should have been rather extravagant in his encomiums on Virginity; were it only through a desire of repairing his character, which had, though unjustly, suffered much in the minds of the Romans, by his attachment to the virtuous Paula.

The second Council of Toledo in 531 appears to be the first which required a vow or promise of Continence from those who were to be ordained. Many others did



indeed, prohibit the use of marriage, either totally, or partially, about this time, to Priests and Deacons: but the effects of these laws were such, that in 888, the Councils of Mentz and Metz were obliged to forbid them to dwell even with their nearest female relations; as some Priests had been guilty of incest with their own sisters. So we see that though Celibacy was, upon one account or other, proposed by many great men, and enjoined by several Councils of particular provinces: yet no authority could persuade the observance of a practice so repugnant to reason, and the feelings of mankind. The frequent necessity there was of renewing the decrees and canons which recommended or ordained the establishment of it, are a fair argument, that in all times, and in all places, it met with almost universal opposition. Nor can the many laws made in favour of it, any more prove it of Apostolic institution, than as many others which were made against admitting into the Clergy persons who had been twice married, can prove the obligation of excluding Bigamists from the Ministry; though this was also built upon great *authorities*, the general *tradition* of most Churches, the *decrees* of various Councils, and the persuasion even of its being of *divine* appointment, as is expressly affirmed by Tertullian, *ad Uxor*, l. 1. c. 7. and by Pope Innocent *Ep.* 4. c. 2. Yet even in S. Jerom's time this idea was so far dropped, that he affirms that there were more Bishops ordained who were in this case, than would equal the multitude of all who were assembled in the numerous Council of Ariminum,

Ariminum, *Epif. ad Oceanum*. The fate of Celibacy, though so repeatedly enforced, seems to have been much the same. For S. Athanasius persuading Dracontius a holy Monk to accept of the Episcopal office which he declined through love of a retired life, assures him, that he might, if he pleased, continue to live in the same manner as he did before; And his arguments deserve our notice. "Many Bishops, says he, have not married at all: and many Monks have been fathers of Children. And we have known Bishops fathers of children, and Monks having no posterity: for both are, alike, lawful to each; neither the one nor the other is forbidden to them." This seems express; and unless it was meant of the time during which they were Bishops and Monks, his reasoning would cease to be of any force. S. Epiphanius tells us that, in his time, the Clergy observed Continency: but adds *hæc*. 59. c. 4. "This is chiefly done where the Ecclesiastical Canons are accurately observed. But you will say to me that in some places, Priests, Deacons, and Sub-deacons beget children? -- This is done -- by reason of the great number of the Clergy, there not being found a sufficiency of continent persons." S. Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact, says Dom Calmet, *Comm. in Ep. ad Tit. c. 1. v. 8.* insinuate that those who were made Bishops when married, might cohabit with their wives, as before: and in the same place, he adds, "S. Epiphanius testifies that in his days, many Priests and Deacons did not use marriage:" from which we may justly conclude that *many* also did.

S. Gregory Nazianzen was born after his Father was made Bishop, as he himself assures us (*Carm. de Vita sua*); as well as his Brother Cæsarius, whom, in his funeral oration, he frequently stiles a young man, snatched away by an untimely death, although his Father had then been Bishop above forty years. This respectable old man was raised to the See of Nazianzum soon after the Council of Nice, held in 325: whereas Gregory, who died in 389, at 62. years of age, was only born in 327, or 328. Hence, although Baronius endeavours to clear this Venerable Bishop of the Crime of getting children after his ordination, we must surely allow S. Gregory to have been acquainted with his own age, better than we possibly can, at this distance of time. About 410 Synesius was, for his great learning, chosen Bishop of Ptolemais in Egypt, the great nursery of monastic discipline, where Celibacy was in high repute, and pretty universally observed by the Bishops. He was passionately fond of his wife, and openly declared (see *Ep. 105 ad Evodium*), that “he would neither totally separate himself from the company of his wife, nor yet, separating himself in appearance only, enjoy her company by stealth, as an adulterer; for this would be unlawful; that, unjust: but that he both intended and desired to have many and pretty children.” Notwithstanding this profession, from which we do not know that he ever departed, he was ordained by Theophilus Patriarch of Alexandria, than whom none better knew the Canons of the Church. And even S. Jerom himself against Jovinian, *lib. 1.*

c. 13, says: "If Samuel married a wife, what does this prejudice Virginity? As if, at this day also, many Priests are not married!" Now, surely, Samuel cohabited with his wife. This liberty seems to have been retained much longer by such Churches as were not subject to the discipline of the Roman Canons, and the authority of the Roman Patriarch, as appears from history. Collet, a modern Theologian of repute, allows that S. Leo, in the 5th age, was the first who imposed Celibacy on Sub-deacons; which was not universally observed, says he, even in the Latin Church, till the 11th age.

Therasia, the wife of S. Paulinus Bishop of Nola in the 5th age, was the companion of all her husbands travels, and of his whole life; even in his retirement at Nola. And S. Jerom, *Epist.* 13, *ad Paulinum*, though he calls her his *Sister*, seems to insinuate that he cohabited with her. Certain it is that he never separated himself from her, notwithstanding the decrees of Pope Syricius, who (probably upon this account) received him at Rome in a very churlish manner, as we may gather from the letters of Paulinus to Severus.—No more did many other holy men, as appears from the histories of the times in which they lived.

In 692, in the Council of Constantinople in Trullo composed of 211 Bishops, which was properly only a continuation of the 6th general Council; a life of Continency, which had till then been left to the choice



choice of each individual, was enjoined to the Western Clergy by a kind of *Law*; far different, however, from that which is observed in the Roman Church. The words are these: (*Can. 13, Tom. 6, Concil. Labbe Col. 1148.*) “Whereas we are informed, that in the Church of Rome, it is prescribed in form of a Canon, that those who are to be promoted to the order of Priest or Deacon should promise perpetual abstinence from their wives: we, following the ancient rule of Apostolical perfection and discipline, enact that henceforward the marriages of persons in Holy Orders be accounted firm and valid, neither dissolving their union, nor depriving them of their rights (*mutua consuetudine*) at proper times. . . . . If, therefore, any one shall presume, against the Apostolic Canons, to deprive Priests, Deacons, or Sub-deacons of the lawful company of their wives, let him be deposed: and if any Priest, or Deacon should put away his wife, through pretence of piety, let him be excommunicated (*segregatus*); and if he perseveres, let him be deposed.” This constitution is observed in the Greek Church, even to this day, with the approbation of the Church of Rome. Their Clergy all marry before they are ordained, and cohabit with their wives: though their Bishops are obliged to Continency, being mostly taken out of monasteries. This Council was always reckoned a *general* one by the Greeks, and often by the Latins. Pope Adrian 1, *Ep. ad Taras.* citing the 82d Canon, calls it “one of the Divine, and lawfully enacted Canons of the sixth Synod.”

Synod." And, the second Council of Nice styles it *Œcumenical*, and cites the same Canon. When this decree was made, the assembly consisted of above fifty Bishops more than were present at the former sessions of it; and the Council *in Trullo* is as truly a continuation of the sixth General Council, as the various sessions of the Council of Trent during eighteen years, may be reckoned parts of that celebrated meeting. (a)

This was nearly the state of Celibacy for the first thousand years of the Christian Æra. The present discipline of the Greek Church was ratified in the Council of Latran under Innoc. 3 : whereas, the Greek Church not only rejects, but condemns as unjust the contrary practice of the Latins. Now, if all their Priests are allowed to marry, and actually do enter into this engagement before their ordination; why should not the same indulgence be permitted after it, especially in case of the death of a former wife? Such a distinction is evidently groundless. Their allowing of marriage previous to

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ordination,

(a) To form a right idea of this famous Council, and of the manner in which it was carried on, we may read the history of it by Cardinal Pallavicini, and another by Fra-Paolo Sarpi. From comparing the two accounts together, we shall, probably, come nearer to the truth, than if we exclusively, gave an entire credit to either. But it would be easy to shew that the history of the learned and virtuous servite Theologian and Counsellor of the republic of Venice, deserves as much credit, as the more elegant account given us by the Cardinal. See Courayer's translation of Fra-Paolo's work, published at London in 1736, or that of Amelot de la Houffaye in 1686.

ordination, and the use of it afterwards, shews that it is not esteemed to derogate either from the dignity, or the sanctity of the calling; and therefore, excludes every *sublime* speculation concerning the excellence of Continency, or any fancied uncleanness in the marriage state. Now the same reasons which were urged for this allowance before, and with a view of subsequent ordination, are equally conclusive after it, in case they are by any means deprived of this blessing: and the slightest knowledge of the human constitution teaches that they are then even much more prevalent. This partial concession, therefore, can only be built on prejudice and custom, which unfortunately we find often over-rule the justest conclusions drawn from propriety, and solid argument.

It must further be observed, that in many places where continency was enjoined, the breach of this law by marriage, was, by several Councils, punished only by depriving the offenders of the exercise of their orders; or in some cases, merely by reducing them to a lower station amongst the Clergy, without inflicting any other censure. Indeed, the determinations of different Councils and Doctors with regard to marriage, were often contradictory to each other; and some of them not a little absurd. Thus Pope Gregory, as we have seen before, would permit no married man to enter a Church after he had been with his wife, till he had washed himself with water. Greg. 3, apud Gratian, *can.* 32, q. 7, c. 18. permitted

mitted all to take a *second* during the life of their first wife, if she were disabled by sickness, age, or accident, from performing the duties of the state. The 17th of the Apostolic Canons, and the 3d of the Quinisext Council, command that none be admitted into the Clergy, who had married a prostitute, a slave, or a stage player; and, if admitted, that they should be deposed. The Council of Auxerre in 578, forbids the widows of Priests, or Deacons, to marry again after the death of their husbands: so also the second Council of Mascon in 585, which even extended this prohibition to Exorcists and Acolyths. The Council of Bourges in 1031, forbids any one to marry the daughter of a Priest, Deacon, or Sub-deacon, *because that would be detestable*. By some Councils, a Layman was not admitted to communion, unless he had abstained from the company of his wife during eight days. In 692 the Council of Saragossa forbade Queens to engage in a second marriage after the death of their former husbands; and ordered them to put on the Religious Veil, and to be confined in a monastery for life, &c. &c. The equity of these Canons is evident.

However, I would, in no instance, lay any great stress on Councils, on determinations of particular Popes, on the laws contained in the Decretals, &c. When we consider both the doctrine and conduct of many haughty Pontiffs who assumed the power of determining every point, as well of faith, as discipline,



cipline, ultimately at their own tribunals; the confusion which reigned in many of these assemblies, and their irregular proceedings; the ignorance and vices of the Clergy during several ages; and the ridiculous prejudices which almost universally prevailed: we shall naturally conclude, that if we found our system of belief or practice upon the doctrines of such erroneous guides, we shall, in all likelihood, be grossly misled. See Fleury's discourses upon Ecclesiastical history. (a)

I know, that with respect to the decrees which I have cited above, it will be replied that they were made only by some particular and provincial

(a) Besides, we even know only in part, what has actually been determined in these Councils; for, as the learned Richer, Syndic of the Theological faculty of Paris, acknowledges, *his. Con. general. lib. 1. p. 36*, "There are no books in which there are so many, and such egregiously counterfeited, and spurious writings, as we find in the collections of the Councils: *Equidem cum maximo animi mœrore dicere cogor, nullos extare libros, in quibus tot tantæque fictitia et adulterina scripta, quam in tomis conciliorum legantur.*" And *lib. 4. par. 2*, the same Doctor tells us, that "The court of Rome suppresses and abolishes all those acts, which contradict its usurped Rights; and hence it is, that many spurious things are read as genuine, even in ancient Councils: *Patet Curia (Romanæ) propositum esse omnia delere atque suppressere acta, quæ juribus suis usurpatis adversantur; et hinc etiam fit, ut multa Apocrypha pro veris legantur, etiam in antiquis conciliis.*" Moreover, it can not be doubted that the decrees of many Councils might, with greater propriety, be called the decrees of the faction that prevailed in them. And that which the Cardinal of Lorrain observed at the Council of Trent, is applicable to many other assemblies of the like nature: "*Concilium minime liberum est, cum neque tractari, neque decerni quidquam valeat, nisi quod legatis placeat, et legati nil nisi de voluntate papæ faciunt.*" See Paul Soave *lib. 7*.

provincial Councils, not in any assemblies of the Universal Church. Be that as it may : Individuals, in these particular provinces, were equally compelled to observe their decrees : and it must be remembered that we are arguing *de facto*, not *de jure*. Neither is it an easy matter to determine which are, and which are not general Councils ; a point not at all agreed upon, amongst Roman Catholics themselves. What the French stile *prejugés ultramontains*, though so contemptuously treated by the Gallican Church (a), are little less than

(a) It may not be improper to observe in this place, that many of the maxims of that extensive portion of the *Roman Catholic Church*, are wholly incompatible with the general belief and doctrine of that very Church, with regard to the power and jurisdiction of the Pope. This seems to be, in some measure, acknowledged by M. Fleury in his twelfth discourse on Ecclesiastical History. Whoever will take the trouble to read over that sensible performance, will find that the ideas of the most learned and pious Roman Catholics upon this point are so little settled, that the whole is a most perplexed, and unintelligible system. “ Il faut convenir de bonne foi, says he, qu'en ces matieres, comme en toutes autres, L'usage ne s'accorde pas toujours avec la droite raison ; mais il ne s'ensuit pas que nous devrions abandonner nos principes, que nous voyons clairement fondés sur l'écriture, & sur la tradition de la plus saine antiquité.” And he adds, speaking of some customs which have subsisted there for more than 300 years, that although the popes might have made an opposition, when these were first introduced ; yet now it would not be lawful for them to attempt it. As if there could be any legal prescription against the authority which each Pope, at his installation, is supposed to receive from Christ. Yet the *Gallican Church* has presumed to assign certain limits, even to his jurisdiction. In fact, many of the French writers allow the Pope little more than what is granted to the King of England by the laws of this land ; for however this *Primacy* of our sovereign may have been ridiculed

than *matters of faith* on the other side of the Alps, as is evident from the writings of Bellarmine and others. A Council may be *general*, says Dr. Hooke, *Rel. Nat. and Revel. Prin. tom 3, pag. 355, et ff.* although the Pope refuses to be present at it, or will not submit to it (*cui obtemperare renuit*);—consequently, although he refuses to subscribe to its determinations. What idea must we then form of his supremacy?—So it is disputed whether the Council of Lyons under Innocent IV, and the fifth of Latran are general Councils (see Collet *Theol.* and Dr. Hooke *loc. cit*); although they are almost universally considered as such.

But,

ridiculed or misrepresented by some Roman Catholic writers, this is the limited sense in which it has always been understood by the Theologians of the English Church. “*Tanto studio tantaq sollicitudine cavebam, says James I in his advertisement to the Christian Princes, ne quidquam hoc jurejurando contineretur, præter fidelitatis illius, civilisque & temporalis obedientiæ professionem, quam ipsa natura omnibus sub regno nascentibus præscribit:*” and he affirms lower down, “*nihil in eo contineri, nisi quod ad obedientiam mere civilem et temporalem spectat, qualis summis Principibus a subditis debetur.*” The only power they claim, is that of making laws for the good order of the Church, of supporting those which are enacted by the Bishops, of assembling Councils, of keeping the Ecclesiastics as well as their other subjects in due subordination to their lawful Prince, and of excluding the encroachments of every foreign power; or as Masson expresses it in his *Apology for the English Church*, “*jurisdictio regia non sita est in potestate aliqua sacerdotali, aut in personali alicujus Ecclesiasticæ functionis administratione, sed in auctoritate quadam externa, suprema illa quidem quæ in imperando cernitur, quæque delinquentes pænis civilibus externe coercet.*”

But, Councils sometimes contradicted each other: and when, in after times, this was discovered, some flaw was sought for in one of them, to prove that it was not a general or œcumenical Council. Thus, those of Pifa, Constance in 1414, and Basil in 1431, determined that a general Council was superiur to the Pope; but the fifth of Latran in 1512 was of a different sentiment, as well as all the Roman Pontiffs to the present times. The sixth general Council in 681 determined that marriage is dissolved by Herefy: whereas that of Trent *sess.* 24 has decreed the contrary. So it appears in reality, that the Roman Catholics now reckon those Councils alone to be *general*, which have decreed what is actually believed: just in the same manner as they profess an unlimited deference to the decisions of general Councils in matters of faith, and then determine those things to be matters of faith, in which they all consent to agree. Dr. Hooke rejects the fifth Council of Latran, because not more than an hundred Bishops were present at it; and says, *pag.* 376, that the Parliament of Paris, with the approbation of the Gallican Clergy, appealed from it to a future *more general* Council: from all which we may gather how confused and indeterminate this matter still is. Again; the same persons reject the Council of Constantinople which condemned the Veneration of Images, though it consisted of 338 Bishops, who stiled their decrees, *definitions of the holy, and great œcumenical Council.* The Council of Trent *sess.* 24, anathematizes those  
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who maintain that marriages contracted by young persons of family without the consent of their parents, are null : but notwithstanding this decree, the Parliaments of France dissolve them, and declare them invalid. Yet, France is a Roman Catholic country !

This may perhaps appear a digression from the subject in hand : but it is more closely connected with it, than may, at first, be apprehended. When we are speaking of the authority of the Church, nothing can be misplaced, which affects the infallibility of its decrees.

In the 11th age, Hildebrand, chosen Pope under the name of Gregory VII, renewed every law that had been made in favour of Celibacy, and enjoined the observance of it under severest censures. But we must not forget that this was the ambitious Pontiff who treated all the sovereigns of Europe as his vassals, who formed the great design of subjecting the whole Christian world to the see of Rome, and cited Kings to appear at his tribunal, under commination of Anathema. The decrees of a man who could curse his Prince (Henry IV) and absolve his subjects from their oath of allegiance, can surely be of little force. His name was, indeed, inserted in the Roman Martyrology under Gregory XIII, and under Benedict the XIII his feast was placed in the Breviary : but the legend which extolled his haughty conduct with regard to the Emperor Henry the IV, was suppressed by the Parliaments and the  
Bishops

Bishops of France; as well as by the Emperor, in all his dominions both in Germany and Italy. It would be unfair to form a judgment concerning the rectitude of his intentions in promoting the Celibacy of the Clergy : yet it is evident, that nothing was in fact more likely to withdraw them from the allegiance they owed to their respective Princes, to diminish their affection to their native countries, and, when once it should be firmly established throughout the world, to attach them more closely, in every event, to the interests of the Court of Rome. Accordingly, we see that in the Council of Trent, when many Catholic powers were desirous that the Clergy might be allowed to marry, *Radolpho Pio di Caro* an Italian Cardinal wisely observed, that this inconvenience would arise from it, that “having house, wife, and children, they would no longer depend upon the Pope, but on the Prince; - - - and in a short time, the authority of the Apostolic See would be confined within the walls of Rome.”

Whatever, therefore, were Hildebrand's motives; it was a Political stroke, and had every appearance of a deep laid scheme. Rome was ever an excellent nursery for Politicians. “The Cardinals, says Abbé Richard (*Description de L' Italie*, tom. 5), have a wonderful address in promoting their designs : and the flexibility of mind which they acquire amidst the intrigues of that Court, renders them fit to manage the most important negotiations.”—Hildebrand forwarded the observance of his decree by force of arms, by

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threats,

threats, and by all the thunders of the Vatican. But it seems that the Clergy, in many places, chose rather to lie under the sentence of his Anathema, than to comply. See Simeon Dunel. *de Gest. Reg. Ang.* Hoveden's *Annals*, and Bromton *Cbron.* ad An. 1074.

It was to promote such ends as these, and the visionary notions of the excellence of the unmarried state, that many ridiculous miracles were invented and propagated. However absurd these may now be esteemed, yet they shew what means were taken by some, to inculcate such unwarrantable Doctrines. Hence arose the wonderful tale of the 11,000 noble Virgins, and 60,000 Plebeians, who accompanied S. Ursula; of the Crucifix which in the Synod of Canterbury gave its vote with S. Dunstan against the married Clergy (*Polyd. Virg. bis. Eng. l. 6.*); of a whole Colledge of married Priests at Elingen turned into Eels (*Capgrave*); Of S. Alexius's being admonished by Christ to abandon his virtuous wife on the first night of their marriage; &c. A thousand similar stories no less ridiculous were invented, to terrify the married Clergy, to amuse the multitude and excite them against their Pastors, and to advance the interests of Religion: or, rather, the pretensions of the Court of Rome. These, it will be said, are such foolish legends, that it is unfair they should, on any account, be still recorded. They were confessedly the offspring of Ignorance and Credulity: wherefore then rescue them from  
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that oblivion into which they had deservedly fallen? I will acknowledge their spurious original. But if these are no longer to be recorded; why should the laws that were made in those same ages and which are supported on the same ruinous foundations, be still up held?

From the decrees of Gregory VII which prohibited the marriage of the Clergy, Radulphus de Diceto and Matthew Paris assure us that "There arose so great a scandal, that not even in the time of any Heresy, had the Church been ever divided by a greater Schism." Lambertus Schafnaburg *ad An.* 1074 tells us, that "on this occasion the Clergy were in a rage, crying out that the man was evidently an Heretic: that he certainly disregarded the words of Christ; - - - since he pretended, by such violent methods, to oblige those who were but mere men, to lead a life of Angels; whereas he was only opening a door to every species of corruption and defilement. That if he continued to urge the observance of this law, as he seemed to despise his fellow creatures, he might seek for Angels, if he could contrive to procure them, to teach and instruct his people". (a) Sigefroi Bishop of May-  
ence,

(a) Adversus hoc decretum protinus vehementer infremuit tota factio clericorum, hominem plane hæreticum, et vesani dogmatis esse clamitans, qui oblitus sermonis Domini --- violenta exactione homines vivere cogeret ritu angelorum; et --- fornicationi, et immunditiæ fræna laxaret. Quod si pergeret sententiam confirmare, malle se sacerdotium, quam conjugium deferere; et tunc visurum eum cui homines forderent, unde gubernandis per ecclesiam Dei plebibus, angelos comportaturus esset.



ence assembled a Council at Erford, wherein he pressed the Clergy either to renounce their wives, or lay aside their functions. But they immediately dissolved the Council; and many cried out, in a tumultuous way, that the Archbishop ought to be torn in pieces, sooner than suffered to proceed in his detestable designs. (See *bis. Eccl. in 3 vol. Paris 1768.*) And, when in 1075 he again attempted to promulgate the same law, he narrowly escaped with life, and was forced to lay aside all thoughts of mentioning it for the future. Sigebert a Monk of Gemblours relates other consequences of it still more deplorable (a). Yet Peter Damian, the great agent of the Popes in the cause of Celibacy, says, that it was the custom of the Church of Rome severely to exact a compliance with other points of Ecclesiastical discipline, but to connive at, and dispense with the lusts of the Clergy *Epis. ad Nic. 2.* And Aventinus remarks, that “ these laws gave great satisfaction to the dissolute, as they might now, instead of being

(a) Gregorius Papa, *says he*, uxoratos sacerdotes a Divino officio removit—novo exemplo, et (ut multis visum est) inconsiderato præjudicio, contra Sanctorum Patrum sententiam, &c. Ex qua re tam grave oritur Scandalum, ut nullius hæresis tempore, Sancta Ecclesia graviore schismate discissa sit,—Continentiam paucis tenentibus, aliquibus eam modo quæstus et jactantiæ causa simulantibus; multis incontinentiam perjurio aut multipliciori Adulterio cumulantibus. Hac opportunitate. . . . Laici sacra mysteria temerant, - - - - - infantes baptizant, sordido humore aurium pro sacro oleo et chrismate utentes, - - - - - corpus Domini a presbiteris conjugatis consecratum, pedibus conculcaverunt, &c. See Usher.

being confined to one wife, have free access to 600 women. Gratissima hæc fuere scortatoribus, quibus pro una uxore, sexcentas mulieres inire licet." This was also urged by many at the Reformation, as a reason for granting the Clergy liberty to marry, viz, the safety of their own wives and daughters: which shews how much Incontinency prevailed amidst all these disputes on the merits of Celibacy. Of the same nature was the remark of Augustus to the Roman People of old, when marriage seemed to have fallen into disrepute: Licentiam libidini ac lasciviæ vestræ exercendæ quæritis.

The Pope's pretensions were ever opposed by many great and learned men: But these were overpowered by the violence of the Court of Rome; by the zeal and prevailing interests of the monastic order. Yet many retained their wives for some ages after, says Aventinus (*Annal. Boior. lib. 5.*); and the same appears from an assembly held by the Pope's Legates in Dalmatia in 1199, and from the Council of Latran in 1215 under Innocent 3. The 14th Canon of this Council is: "Whereas many of the Clergy, according to the custom of their countries, have not renounced their wives: if any of these commit fornication or adultery; let them be more severely punished, because they can have recourse to lawful marriage." Nor can this be understood of the Greek Clergy, of whom no mention is made either before, or after.

As to the discipline of the English Church in particular, we find from an old manuscript Chronicle of Winchester, (apud Spelm. Con Ang. tom. 1), that all the monasteries of England, except Glastenbury and Abingdon, were nothing else but Colleges of married Priests, till Edgar about 974, at the instigation of Dunstan, expelled them thence, and introduced his Monks in their stead. Malmesb.: *de Ges. pont. Ang.* tells us that when the Clergy had their choice either to quit their wives, or their monasteries; they forsook their habitations, and abandoned them to these intruders. However, this violence of Edgar and the zealous Bishop did not affect the secular Clergy, whether parochial Priests, or such as were possessed of Prebends in Cathedral or Collegiate Churches. And it is remarkable, that even amongst King Edgar's Canons, (*Can. 30 apud Lambardum*) there is one which decrees: that "If a Mass-Priest commit fornication, or violate his marriage, he shall fast ten years, and bewail his crime ever after."—How far *Saint Dunstan* acted in these affairs according to the laws of equity; and whether he did not forget that *the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world*!, I leave to others to determine. But the many extravagant miracles related to have been performed during these transactions, give us reason to presume that his zeal sometimes prevented him from giving fair play to those whom he was resolved to exterminate, and whom it was upon that account his interest to discredit.

Lanfranc,

Lanfranc, in a Council held at Winchester in 1076, despairing to introduce the decrees of Gregory the VII without some modification, allowed such of the Priests who lived in the country villages to retain their wives. (a)

In 1102, Anselm, who had been educated in a Monastery, endeavoured to introduce the papal laws of Celibacy into England. He forbade the Clergy to have wives: which, says Henry de Knighton, was not prohibited them before. The same reflections nearly are made by Henry Huntington, *Hist. l. 7*, and Matthew Paris: And it is remarkable that when the Cardinal of Crema was sent into England by the Pope in 1125 on the same design and in a Synod held at London, had with great apparent zeal persuaded the Clergy to dismiss their wives and live in continence; he was caught that very night in the Arms of a Prostitute (if we may credit Matthew Paris, Brompton, Huntington, *lib. 7*, and Hoveden *Annal. par. 1.*), and dismissed with shame. Certain at least it appears from ancient deeds and records, that the privilege of marrying was still claimed by the Clergy in England, till the middle of the 14th Century: and the laws which many Popes and Councils endeavoured to renew against this custom in the 12th and

(a) Nullus Canonicus uxorem habeat: sacerdotum vero in castellis et in vicis habitantium habentes uxores, non cogantur ut dimittant; non habentes, interdicantur ut habeant. *Concil. Ang.*



and 13th ages so frequently and with so little success, shew how steadily the Clergy continued to adhere to *ancient usages*: for this was their constant plea by a kind of perpetual succession from the most early times. It appears moreover that several amongst them, though they did not contract a marriage with the accustomed ceremonies of the Church, yet used frequently to pledge their faith to the Concubines with whom they lived, never to forsake them; a contract which in the sight of Heaven was perhaps equally binding. This is positively affirmed by the learned Alvarez Pelagius Penitentiary and Nuncio to John XXII (*De planctu Eccl. lib. 2. art. 53*), of many Priests, especially in Spain, Austria, and Galicia. And, since the Reformation, Cassander, whose unexceptionable Character we have seen above, assures us, (*Consult. art. 23*) that the best and most religious Priests of the Roman Catholic Communion, perceiving their infirmity and detesting the foulness of unlawful connections, if they dared not publicly, at least privately entered into the marriage state. The same was attested by the Bavarian Ambassador at the Council of Trent: and in the beginning of the 13th Century, many Priests, Canons, and even Bishops married in the most public manner (*See Gallia Christiana, tom. 1. p. 10. cited by Abbé Plucquet in his Memoires pour servir a l'histoire des Egaremens de l'Esprit humain*).

Indeed,

Indeed, not to cite examples from our own times, which would engage me in a disquisition that might possibly give offence, a thing I wish sincerely to avoid; the obligation of Celibacy real or supposed has ever given rise to the greatest crimes: And it should be considered, that the scandal given by one incontinent Priest does more harm to Religion, than either the Celibacy of many can promote it, or the chastity of thousands in a married state possibly could injure it. In support of this assertion I will only produce the opinion of a few unexceptionable writers who have appeared in latter times: and these I hope will be deemed sufficiently conclusive. Alvarez Pelagius who was Bishop of Silva in the beginning of the 14th age, wishes that the Clergy never had professed a life of Continency, especially those of Spain, where “The Children of the Laity, says he (de plan. Ecc.) are scarce more numerous than those of the Clergy.” In the next age, Gerson, whom Cardinal Zabarella in the Council of Constance stiled “The greatest Doctor of his times,” affirms (de vita spir. animæ) that it was *necessary* to tolerate incontinent Priests, since scarce any others could be found. Clemangis, Doctor of Sorbonne and Rector of the University of Paris relates (de corrup. statu Eccl. l. 15) that in many dioceses, the Parish Priests, by paying a certain sum of money to their Bishops, were publicly permitted to keep their Concubines.(a) Sleidan tells us (Comment. l. 3) that it

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(a) In plerisque Diœcesibus Rectores Parochiarum ex certo et conducto cum prelatiis suis pretio, passim et publice concubinas

was usual in some Cantons of Switzerland for the inhabitants to oblige every Pastor, when first he came amongst them, to take a Concubine, that he might not attempt the chastity of their wives and matrons. John, Bishop of Saltzburg, in his *Onus Ecclesiæ* written just before the Reformation, says that there were very few Curates in Germany who did not wallow in the filth of Concubinary; and that the nunneries, in his time, were as full of Prostitutes as the Common Stews, *propatula ut ipsa loca Veneris*. In a visitation made in 1619 by the Bishop of Serzane, at the request of Paul V, it was found that in the three large Provinces of Styria, Carinthia and Carniola, there were only six Priests who did not keep Concubines (See *Moral. prac. des Jesuites* by some Doctors of Sorbonne). — Now, allowing that in these relations and others far more severe and scandalous, which for the honour of human nature I omit to cite at large (b), there may be some exaggeration,

cubinas tenent. In another passage of the same work he says: “Si quis desidiosus est, si quis a labore abhorrens, si quis in otio luxuriari volens, ad sacerdotium convolat: quo adepto, statim se cæteris sacerdotibus voluptatum sectatoribus adjungit, qui magis secundum Epicurum, quam secundum Christum viventes, et cauponas sedulo frequentantes, potando, commessando, pransitando, convivando, cum tesseriis et pilo ludendo, tempora tota consumunt. Crapulati vero et inebriati, pugnant, clamant, nomen Dei et Sanctorum pollutis suis labiis execrantur; sicque tandem vix compositi, ex meretricium suarum amplexibus ad Divinum altare veniunt.” In fine, as Cassander remarks “Eo res jam rediit, ut vix centesimum invenias qui ab omni commercio sæminarum abstinet.” How greatly all this to the credit of Celibacy!

(b) See Wolf. *Lect. mirab. Cent. 15*, and the *fasciculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum* published first at Cologne in

exaggeration, perhaps some falsehoods, dictated by prejudice or malevolence, or founded upon idle report; yet, surely, enough will still remain to shew the pernicious consequences of Celibacy. And it would have been infinitely better, if each of those who are here so severely censured, had, as the Apostle adviseth 1 Cor. vii, 2, been permitted to have *his own Wife* (a).

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1535 by Orthuinus Gratius (Graës), and republished with many additions, by Edward Brown, at London in 1690. There are many articles in that collection which will fill the reader with astonishment: as the life of Hildebrand, (Gregory VII) by Cardinal Beno; the treatise of the Parisian Doctors, *de Periculis Ecclesiæ; of the Reformation of Manners*, by Cardinal Campegius; *Articuli Scholasticorum Parisiensium adversus monachos; Petitiones Oratorum Ferdinandi Cæsaris legatis Pontificiis in Con. Trid. exhibitæ; Elenchus abusuum et Corruptelarum in Ecclesia Romana*, by George Wicelius. &c.

(a) I acknowledged above, that we might perhaps admit that there were in these accounts some exaggerations: yet we cannot doubt that these shameful disorders did, in fact, too generally prevail. Clemangis, in his treatise *On the Corrupt State of the Church*, relates them as publicly notorious; and speaks of these abuses, not as the reports of idle hearsay, but as what came within the reach of his own certain knowledge. Indeed, his whole work exhibits a melancholy picture of universal depravity. *Cap. 16*, He represents the Clergy in general, as a set of lazy, drinking, gaming, swearing fellows, who reeled to the Altar from the arms of their mistresses. *Cap. 22*, He says that the Mendicants surpassed in profligacy the most abandoned amongst the Heathens --- defiling every thing with their extravagant and insatiate lusts. *Cap. 23*, He assures us that nunneries were, at that time, nothing but Temples of Venus and houses of infamy, the receptacles of dissolute gallants who resorted thither to indulge themselves in every species of voluptuous riot; so that the veiling of a nun was just the same as if she were devoted to public prostitution ----! Nor are the insolence and vices of the Cardinals, or the venality and corruption of the Court of Rome delineated with less strength of expression.—*Quis talia-fando, temperet a Lachrimis!*



It was the full conviction of the truth of these enormities, and the scandal which they caused, that induced many good and learned men of the Church of Rome to advise the abrogation of this law. So, Anthony of Palermo (*In Cap. cum olim, de Cler. conjug.*) says it would be a salutary regulation for the good and salvation of souls. Pius II (*See Platina in his life,*) confessed that "There were formerly some reasons why marriage should be prohibited to the Clergy; but there are now much stronger motives why it should be permitted." Polydore Virgil who was sent into England by the Pope not long before the change of Religion says, (*De Invent. rerum, l. 5*): "This involuntary abstinence from marriage is far from surpassing conjugal chastity; since no species of crime ever brought such disgrace upon the Holy order of Priesthood, greater detriment to Religion, or a greater grief to all good men, than the incontinence of the Clergy: Wherefore, it would perhaps be to the interest as well of Christianity itself, as of the Priesthood, that at length the right of public marriage should be restored to them." Cassander (*Consult. Art. 23.*), expresses the same wish: and Erasmus tells us (*Annot. in Ep. 1. ad Tim. c. 3.*), that "If we consider the multitudes of Monks, Priests, and Clergymen, and how few of so great a number truly preserve chastity of life; with how great scandal many of them are openly incontinent and incestuous; in what depths of filth innumerable of them wallow; we shall perhaps conclude that it would be more proper that those

those who do not contain, should be allowed the freedom of marriage. . . . I very much fear, *continues he*, that the revenues of the Church make more Clergymen Eunuchs at this day, than Piety."(a)

The same were the sentiments of many Princes and States before the Council of Trent, when they petitioned for the Reform of the Clergy. And, during the time that this Council was held, as well as after the conclusion of it, the Emperors *Ferdinand II* and *Maximilian II*, *Sigismund* King of Poland, *Albert* Duke of Bavaria, and other sovereign Princes earnestly requested an alteration of discipline in this point, by their respective Ambassadors(b). Yet, notwithstanding this, the voice of prejudice

(a) His words *Lib. de Conscrib. Litt.* are no less forcible, where he wishes that the Concubines which the Clergy almost universally entertained with infamy and against their conscience, were changed into lawful wives. "This, *says he*, would, I believe, have long since been done, if the officials of the Bishops did not make a greater profit by allowing them their Concubines, than they would do if they were married.

(b) It evidently appears from hence and from various other monuments of the times, that some reformation in the Church was absolutely requisite. That which has taken place in many states of Christendom, has evidently tended to improve the morals, and lessen the dissolution which prevailed before, even in those countries which have not embraced the reform. For, whatever be the case in America, Spain, or some other Kingdoms where vice and immorality are still said to reign amongst the Clergy, It is but justice to acknowledge, that in many Roman Catholic states, they are infinitely more regular and exemplary in their conduct, than they are represented to have been some centuries ago.

prejudice most unaccountably prevailed. Although it is universally allowed to be merely an Ecclesiastical ordinance; these several petitions, founded upon the most unanswerable reasons, were set aside: and many virtuous citizens were injured in their most sacred rights. Hence the same abuses still subsist, and probably will be perpetuated, by an obstinate adherence to *ancient* customs in themselves so indifferent, yet so highly prejudicial both to individuals and to society. It is the history of the imprudent Roboam who by listening to the injudicious advice of his young counsellors, lost the most flourishing portion of his kingdom. And it is easy to foresee that the same ill-judged policy will, sooner or later, produce again a like fatal revolution. Those who know how ill either the *practice*, or the *belief* of many thousands who conform to the Roman Catholic mode of worship, corresponds with the discipline and the acknowledged doctrines of their Church, will easily admit the propriety of this observation. For it is a fact, that several persons of that communion, men of real probity and unaffected Religion are daily to be found in society, who have formed to themselves particular systems on one point or other which satisfy their own minds, but which, if properly canvassed, might easily be shewn to be inconsistent with the belief required of them to be real members of that Church(a).

For

(a) The *Divine* appointment of auricular confession; the destruction of the matter of the bread in the Eucharist; the power

For a proof of the evil tendency of this decree of the Council of Trent, I would only appeal in a general way, to the Physicians and Confessors in Roman Catholic Countries, who best know of what detriment a life of Celibacy often proves both to corporal health and purity of manners; and would then leave it to the determination of all Christians, whether *this yoke be sweet, and this burthen light.*

However, the Council of Trent did not determine as an article of faith, that the marriage of the Clergy was null and void; but only pronounced Anathema against those who affirmed that it was not. It did not determine this doctrine as an article of communion, but as a law of discipline, which only binds where it is promulgated and received. For the Roman Catholics hold that nothing can be of faith which is not revealed, and proposed, moreover, to the whole Church, *tanquam fide divina credendum*, as an object of divine faith to which they must all assent. Now with what authority the Church can pronounce Anathema against those who refuse to comply with a point of discipline, which

power of granting indulgencies, such as it is even now exercised by the Court of Rome on every most trifling occasion; the unerring authority of Councils; the obligation of Ecclesiastical laws with respect to holidays, abstinence, &c, under pain of eternal damnation; the unlawfulness of contracting a second marriage, when a former is dissolved by reason of adultery, &c. &c; are so many points upon which many worthy members of that society either totally suspend their judgment, or which they explain away, till the doctrine is substantially altered.



which discipline all Christians are not obliged to admit, is beyond my comprehension. Indeed the whole of this controversy is yet involved in great perplexities. See Veron's *Regula fidei*, in which this respectable Theologian mentions another incomprehensible circumstance as absolutely requisite to make any doctrine to be *a point of faith*, although defined by a Council, *viz.* that it be *definable*, “*ut objectum sit definibile:*” which, if it has any meaning at all, must signify, that it may define whatever it has received power to define. A most unquestionable truth!

Having in the beginning of this letter only mentioned, in a cursory way, that the law of Celibacy was not of *Divine* institution; and that a state of Virginity is not preconised so much in the sacred scriptures, as is often affirmed; I will now consider some texts which are adduced in support of the contrary opinion, and endeavour to answer the objections which have often been held forth as conclusive arguments in this controversy.

“A Bishop, says S. Paul, 1 *Tim.* iii, must be a man of one wife.” This quotation, as it has been cited to prove that a Bishop must essentially be a married man; so it also has with as little reason, if taken in an unlimited sense, to shew that though such persons who had been married might, in the primitive Church, be chosen Bishops; yet no one could be raised to that dignity, unless in extraordinary

dinary cases, who had been married twice. This comment was invented to support the fictitious idea of there being some degree of uncleanness essentially inherent in the marriage state; upon which account they suppose that it was prohibited to the Clergy, who were appointed to administer the Holy Sacrament. But they who object this do not surely recollect that all the faithful, in the primitive ages, *daily* received the Communion. Wherefore then was it not equally improper for the Laity, when married, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in their unhallowed mouths and *hands*? Such absurd pretences do not merit a serious reply. The evident meaning of the Apostle is, That a Bishop ought not to have *two wives* at one and the same time: that is, one with whom he actually lived, and another whom he had repudiated. So Theodoret with reason understood this passage. Thus we see, *chap. 5. v. 9*, that a widow was to be *a wife of one man*; or, in other words, that she was never to have been repudiated: because in cases of divorce a woman always suffered more or less in her reputation, and therefore might be unfit to be chosen among the Church-Widows. In the same manner the imprudent behaviour of a woman who had for some fault or other been divorced, might be esteemed a reflection upon the person to whom she had once been joined; and therefore render it unadvisable that he should be advanced to the first dignities of the Church while she was yet alive, and her indiscretions were still recent in the memory of the faithful.

The text is also susceptible of another explanation: and indeed it seems most natural to conclude from it, that S. Paul in reality *wished* such to be chosen into the ministry who actually were married; or else his argument loses all its weight. For a Bishop was to shew by the obedience and good conduct of his children, that he was fit to be proposed over others; and to evince by the judicious management of his own family, that Christians might safely trust him with their most essential concerns. At least it is manifest that he *preferred* such as had been married; for those who had not, could have no such proofs to give, by which they could merit the confidence of their people. (a)

A

(a) Besides, how can we suppose that the Apostle only means to exclude *Bigamists*, or such as had been twice married, from being promoted to the Episcopal Dignity! Was Bigamy a greater crime or more pernicious in its consequences, than homicide, adultery, perjury, or any other species of guilt? Yet he mentions none of these as excluding from this sacred order, although these crimes might possibly have been committed in a former part of life, by some who were called to the ministry. Yet in consequence of this unnatural explication, the Council of Neocaesarea, (*Can. 3.*) subjects even those amongst the Laity who contracted second or third marriages, to public penance: and the Roman Catholics still refuse, on such occasions, to bless the nuptial bed.

S. Chrysostom (*Hom. 3. in Timot.*) was of the same opinion as Theodoret, cited in the text. See also S. Jerom *Ep. 83. c. 2.* Nor can it be conceived how all these extraordinary sentiments should have so generally prevailed, when they were originally built upon such unsolid foundations. Yet we see with astonishment that for some time they so far gained ground, that if the intemperate zeal of Jerom had not been checked, he probably would have renewed the



A second place in S. Paul's Epistles which is supposed to favour a single state, is the seventh Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The chief persons of the Church of Corinth who, it seems, were fond of mixing Philosophical *speculations* with the *practices* of Religion, had consulted S. Paul upon conjugal matters. To their queries he endeavours to give a satisfactory answer; and the following paraphrase and remarks exhibit, I think, a fair representation of what the Apostle intended to inculcate. (a)

V. 1. *Now concerning, &c.* "It might perhaps be

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proper,

the Heresy mentioned 1 Tim. iv, 3, and have endeavoured to persuade the Christians of his age that matrimony was, indirectly at least, prohibited by the Scriptures.

(a) For the convenience of the reader I shall here insert the whole of this passage. "1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good* for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer: and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. 6 But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment. 7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, *It is good* for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. . . . 24 Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God. 25 Now concerning Virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.



proper, considering the present unsettled state of Christians, daily exposed to sundry persecutions, to slight, to loss of goods, &c, not to enter into any connection with women; as these tender ties may by unavoidable accident, yet such as it is easy to foresee, be

faithful. 26 I suppose therefore, that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. 29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. 32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong unto the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife. 34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. 35 And this I speak for your own profit; not as I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. 36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. 37 Nevertheless, he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. 38 So then, he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. 39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the spirit of God.

be rendered of unhappy consequence. All this we may with reason apprehend will soon take place ; yet this consideration is not sufficient with respect to all mankind, to counterballance others of far greater moment : therefore I advise all in general to marry, *for fear of incontinence.*" If this be not his real meaning in those words *It is good not to touch a woman* when addressed to all Christians indiscriminately, they can bear no rational interpretation whatever. On the contrary, they tend but to decry the sanctity of the state, to discountenance the most innocent and endearing of all connections, and would moreover contradict the most express declaration of God, who *Gen. 11*, affirmed that *it was not good for man to be alone.* The Apostle's reasons in favour of marriage are general, *to avoid incontinence* ; and prove as much for the marriage of the Clergy, as of other Christians. *V. 5, Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, to attend to prayer.* This is brought by M. Thorndike and others to prove that if married people are *sometimes* to abstain that they may pray with greater fervour and fewer distractions ; of course, Priests who are called to a life of greater purity, ought *always* to abstain from engaging in a married state. But this is a mere fiction : for *all* Christians are ordered to pray *without ceasing* (*1. Thess. v. 17*), as much as the Clergy. Besides the very idea, as we have shewn above, springs from a manifest error which supposes some moral uncleanness in marriage ; a sentiment which took its rise in the Heresies

of

of Simon Magus, Saturninus, Marcion, Tatian, the Manichees, &c. We have seen before (*pag. 13*) what S. Chrysoftom's opinion was, and how little he thought marriage a hindrance to the application of the mind. Christianity knows no uncleanness but what is of a moral nature. Nothing can defile a man but sin: and no defect arising from our nature can disqualify a Christian for the most sacred offices of Religion. In the Jewish Ritual there were many legal uncleanneſſes contracted by actions in themselves most innocent, as touching a creeping insect; or even commanded, as burying the dead: Yet even in their law, the chaste endearments of the conjugal state were never forbidden to their Priests during the time of their exercising their sacerdotal functions. And if *1 Sam. 21, 4,* and *Exod. xix. 15.* such an abstinence seems required of those who were admitted to a nearer participation of holy things, we must observe that it was only enjoined to such as by their calling were not entitled to such an extraordinary favour. The perfection of the Christian Priesthood consists in *a pure conscience and a faith not feigned*: whereas the Jewish dispensation was in *meats and drink, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of correction,* (*Heb. 9*); or till it should give way to a more rational and simple worship. — The natural shame attending many necessary actions obliges us to draw a veil of modesty over them; and a virtuous blushing woman is as much more aimable and engaging than a bold and shameless prostitute, as she is more innocent:



innocent. But, again; that alone which defiles the heart can render it odious either in the sight of God, or in the estimation of sensible men. In this place then S. Paul speaks only of the particular weakness of some, whose constant attention to the gratification of their passions might perhaps prove of some hindrance and distraction: So that in fact he rather looks upon marriage as a means to calm the mind and render it more attentive to prayer. Yet *ver. 6*, he affirms that he does not *command* it to all, as some might perhaps from natural temperament not stand in need of this indulgence; whereas others had not this gift of *chastity* (a), a virtue which ought ever to be attended to, even in the use of marriage. *V. 6. But I speak this*, viz, all the advice that preceeds. *7. Even as I myself*: by inclination not desirous of engaging in the marriage state; and therefore been free from every tie, less liable, if I fall a sacrifice to the persecutors, to involve others in my ruin. *8. It is good*: I could wish, considering the prevalence of persecution, the *present distress*, that persons of both sexes in the state of widowhood (for this is the sense of the Greek; not *virgins* and *widows*: See Calmet) would continue to remain

(a) Might not this passage bear the following paraphrase? "Defraud not one the other of your rights under pretence of giving yourselves up to fasting and prayer. But, whatever be your motives, if you have parted for a time with mutual consent, Let your separation be at least of short continuance, that neither may be exposed to the temptations of Satan."



remain unmarried(a). 19. *Cannot contain* (Greek; contain not); who are exposed to such violent temptations, that they *cannot* remain in a state of Celibacy, without endangering their salvation: See Calmet. These had better marry, and run all the risks of these tumultuous times, than be *burnt*, or perpetually solicited to sin.—So that the true translation should in reality be *cannot contain*; nor in an absolute sense, but morally speaking. For surely S. Paul did not mean, as Bellarmine pretends (de Monac. l. 2, c. 30), that none should marry till they had actually been guilty of incontinence. Marriage might then indeed prevent the *spreading* evil: but should a Christian run this hazard, and actually offend before he applied the remedy? The first suggestions of concupiscence are not sinful in themselves: but must a Christian not only permit himself to be perpetually harassed with them, his peace of soul to be disturbed, his imagination haunted with sensual ideas, and himself reduced to the very brink of ruin, but even suffer himself to fall, before he ventures to take the Apostles advice? Bellarmine considers marriage as a haven to which none should betake themselves till they had suffered shipwreck: But this is evidently a meaning unworthy of S. Paul. Besides, should a person who had taken a vow be shipwrecked ever so repeatedly; this hard hearted controvertist would not allow him a single plank to save

(a) These had already discharged, in some measure, their duties to society; and may, in general, be supposed to be rather advanced in life.

save himself from sinking. One would at least think that in this desperate situation, even under the influence of an inconsiderate vow, it were better to marry than to be overpowered in the abyfs of waters; yet he pretends that in such a case a man had better live in continual breach of the law, than have recourse to the remedy prescribed by nature, reason, authority, and scripture. 24. *Let every man.* We see from this verse that S. Paul's chief intent was to shew that the Christian Religion did not necessarily introduce any change in the state of society: and, that whether men were in freedom or in slavery; circumcised, or not; in a married or unmarried state; they were not to change their situation merely because they embraced the Christian Religion. For the essence of Christianity consists in the observance of God's Commandments, and *he that loves, fulfils its laws.* 26. *For the present distress:* These words have been sufficiently explained before. They have a special relation to those times of trouble or of trial which Christians were then in, or in which they would soon find themselves involved. Yet he blameth them not if they should marry, but only reminds them that this would expose them to *trouble in the flesh* (v. 28); that is, that they would meet with troubles and distresses which the unmarried would be better enabled to encounter, than he who had a wife and children. The care and love of these would oblige him who was married *to mind the things that are of the world*, how he might please his wife (v. 33) by his attention and solicitude to

provide for the safety of his family: whereas the unmarried had no concern but to *please the Lord* by their readinets to publish the Christian dispensation, and, if required, to suffer death in the defence of truth. 29. *It remaineth* says the Apostle, That those that *weep*, that *possess*, that *buy*, that *use* or enjoy this world, should be *as if they did not*; in which words he teaches that they were neither to be too much depressed with their sufferings, nor attached to their enjoyments however rational, because the *fashion* or figure of this world *was passing away*; because *time* (Gr. the remaining time) *was short* and fleeting; nothing would be of long duration: not only the present system of things, whether of distress or of enjoyment; but even time itself would shortly be no more.--And what indeed is *present time* (*Rom. viii. 18*) when compared to the future Glory of God's *eternal Kingdom*? (a) 35. *For your own profit.*

This

(a) This last expression may also bear another sense, and intimate that the circumstances of all Christians, however different at that time, should be made one and the same by the change of affairs which was now at hand: that a new face of things should appear, and the present scene of tranquillity should be shifted for a scene of troubles and persecution. For though Christ appeared on Earth at a time when the whole world was in peace; yet he assures us, Luke xii. 53, and Matt. x. 35, that the first propagating of the Gospel would be attended with universal confusion. Notwithstanding this S. Paul tells his converts that he would have them be without *carefulness* or solicitude, that is, without too much concern: and then goes on to administer some comfortable reflections, to propose some soothing considerations to those whom he advises by reason of the present or approaching circumstances, to forego, as far as possible, the most endearing calls and enjoyments of life, and not engage in an union which might hourly be dissolved by persecution, &c.

This advice he gives them for their own advantage, not to cast a *snare* upon them, but to convince them that there was no harm in not being married: that to abstain from it for the reasons we have mentioned above, was *comely* and decent; nay even advantageous. He probably insinuated this because it was in general looked upon as a disgrace amongst the Jews, not to be married. Moreover S. Jerom says (*lib 1. con. Jov. c. 7.*) that the words which immediately follow *lay a snare upon you* (and which have in great measure served to perplex the sense of all that preceeds) with the rest to the end of the verse, were not to be found in the ancient Latin copies. Neither did Ambrosiaster, Pelagius, or others read them: See Calmet. 36. *His virgin: i. e.* his virginity. S. Paul seems here to obviate an objection which might be made against his dissuasion from marriage even in the times of *present distress*; namely, that it might appear improper (uncomely) if a person who had lived unmarried till it was rather past his time in life, should afterward find it adviseable to enter into these engagements. To this he answers, that nobody, be the circumstances of the times what they would, should abstain from marriage, unless he were of a steady resolution, entirely at his own disposal, and fully determined in his own mind. This is certainly a very difficult passage; nor is it perhaps possible to explain the 35th and 37th verses so as to make them consistent with each other. The text however cannot be understood of a father and his *virgin* daughter, as it evidently speaks of one who



hath power over his own will, or is at his own disposal; who resolves in his own heart, and is under no necessity. Now all this must certainly be determined by young persons themselves. They alone best know what gifts they have received: nor has a father a right to determine in *his own will* concerning them.(a) It seems therefore much better to render the 38th verse as follows; *he that marrieth (giveth his virginity in marriage) doth well: but he that marrieth not, doth better.* 40. *If she so abide.* All this is to be understood in the sense of v. 26, viz. *On account of the present distress.* So Tertullian *lib 2 ad Uxor. c. 2*, says: “The Apostle permits indeed marriage, but prefers Virginity: illud propter insidias tentationum, illud propter angustias temporum: the one, on account of the danger of temptation, the other by reason of the streights of the times.”(b)

This upon the whole seems to be the meaning of the Apostle. His advice regards the particular circumstances in which he had been consulted; and we ought to have the letter sent to him by the Chiefs of the Corinthians, Fortunatus, Stephanus and

(a) From the words of the Apostle, *having no necessity*, we might perhaps justly infer that sometimes there does exist a kind of moral necessity for marriage. Christians would do well at least to retain such power over their own wills, as to be able to have recourse to marriage if circumstances render it adviseable.

(b) The same also was the opinion of Erasmus, who affirms “Hoc dogma ad ea potissimum tempora pertinere, quibus... cursitandum erat per omnes terras, imminabat undique persecutio.” *De Epis Conscrib. cap. 47.*

and Achaicus, to be able thoroughly to explain his meaning.—Neither is it my intention to deny but that he seems sometimes from present exigencies, to go into further considerations and more general advice to such as are blessed with the gift of continence. In every age of the Church this may be advisable to a few who may from constitution or other circumstances be thereby better enabled to apply to their own, or to their neighbours salvation: but no man can surely in his sober moments believe that the Apostle addressed himself to the numerous class of Citizens in general, whose studies and inclinations lead them to an Ecclesiastical state. Neither can this advice be applied to those thousands who from a prejudicated idea of perfection abandon society, refuse to share in the burthens of it, and instead of *becoming all to all that they may gain all to Christ*, retire into the deserts to spend their time in pious speculations, rather than edify their neighbours by the exertion of more useful virtues. If the phrensy which prevailed in some ages were not abated, what indeed would have become of society? “*Quanti populi habentur in urbibus, says Rufinus, cap. 7, in Vit. Pat. tantæ pæne habentur in desertis multitudines monachorum.* The number of those monks who retire into the deserts is scarce exceeded by the number of men who remain in the cities.” Nor shall we think this account much exaggerated, when we recollect that Palladius tells us (*bis. Lausia sect. 38*) in the life of S. Pachomius, that there were in some monasteries above 7000 Recluses.

Had

Had S. Paul thought Virginity preferable to a married state, in all cases where it was practicable, why does he never say it in general terms, without any restrictions? wherefore does he so often speak in praise of marriage, and call it a great Sacrament representing Christ's union with his Church? Although he knew that *all men do not, (or cannot) receive this saying*, why did he not at least exhort them to it as a teacher and as a friend, in express words, not merely in such obscure expressions as must leave the best disposed persons in perplexity about his meaning? Why did the Apostles permit many holy women to accompany them in all their missions, instead of advising them to retire into solitude and give themselves up to prayer? Why does neither He nor any other Apostle or Evangelist insinuate that the Clergy, at least, should not engage in a married state? Why does he not, instead of recommending such to be chosen Bishops as were, or had been engaged in marriage, give at least reason to conclude that such as were never married would be more eligible? Are we to be directed in all our sentiments by the injudicious speculations and partial conceptions of the ancient Fathers, instead of consulting the scripture and our own reason? (a) - - -

However

(a) The authority of scripture, and of scripture alone seems upon some occasions to have been maintained even by these Primitive Fathers. S. Chrysostom in *2 Thessal. 2*, observes that "Every thing is clear and evident in the scriptures; whatever is necessary, is manifest." So also to the same effect, *Hom. 13, in Genes.* "When the Scripture means to teach

However this has been depreciated, to these alone will our Almighty Judge appeal when he calls us to account : and though we may, by poring over the writings of gloomy Ascetics or endeavouring to persuade ourselves, if possible, of the reality of the many extraordinary and revolting miracles they record, work up our minds, especially when prepared by solitude, watchings and fastings, to an Enthusiastic acquiescence in these ideas; yet in our sober moments, even in the silence of passion, our hearts will speak another language, and tell us that the most perfect way of pleasing God is to accept his

teach us any thing, she explains herself and does not permit him who listens to her, to be led into error." S. Jerom even tells in *Ep ad Galat.* that "that alone is the doctrine of the Holy Ghost which is delivered to us in the Canonical writings; and if the Councils decree any thing contrary to this, it is an abuse." Hence we see that he would have us examine the decrees of Councils by the test of scripture: a doctrine which we presume is not entirely orthodox according to the ideas of the Roman Church. S. Augustin (and the same may be said of the other Fathers) were he now to return to life, would be greatly surprised to find that so much authority was attributed to his writings, when he had expressly desired us not to follow his sentiments on any occasion unless we found them conformable to reason. "Nisi in his in quibus me non errare perspexeris," says he, *de bono perseverantiæ c. 21.* This great man's rule was always to have recourse to Scripture. "Lege hoc mihi de Prophetis, lege mihi de Psalmo; recita de lege, recita de Evangelio, recita de Apostolo, inde Ego recito Ecclesiam toto orbe diffusam." *de Pastoribus c. 14.* And against Cresconius *c. 21.* speaking of S. Cyprian's letters, he says: "Quod in eis Divinarum Scripturarum auctoritati convenit, cum laude ejus accipio; quod autem non congruit, cum pace ejus respuo." This liberty however which he took himself, he also allowed to others; since *lib. 2 ad Vincentium Victorem*, he candidly tells us, "Negare non possum nec debeo, sicut in ipsis majoribus, ita multa esse in tam multis opusculis meis, quæ possunt justo judicio, et nulla temeritate culpari."



his gifts with thankfulness, and to perform in a perfect manner our various duties as Citizens and as men. We shall then be convinced, notwithstanding all these specious reasonings, that the full completion of the law consists in an unfeigned piety, a fortitude dictated by hope, a thorough conviction of the great and comfortable truths of revelation, and an upright conduct in every occurrence of life.

Were we indeed to be guided entirely by the opinions of the fathers, what absurdities should we not be liable to embrace? Thus S. Augustin tells us in various places that every time a man cohabits with his wife, unless merely with a view of being a father, he actually sins: *venialem habet culpam*. Was this the idea of the Apostle when he said *1 Cor. vii, 5, revertimini in idipsum?* A comfortable indulgence, if this were even a *venial* sin; which “hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working, and disposes to mortal crimes” (See *Rom. Cat. Catechism.*)! S. Cæsarius of Arles, *serm. 88 in Appen. Tom 5, S. Aug. Edit Ben. sermone 292, alias de tempore 244*, affirms the same to be “a sin which unless redeemed with fasting and alms, renders the soul unclean;” and assures us moreover *N. 7.* that such who cohabit with their wives *quoties muliebria patiuntur*, or on a Sunday, or other holyday, will have their children born affected with the Leprosy, or Epilepsy, or perhaps possessed by the Devil. (a)

S. Vincent

(a) Those who have perused the writings of the ancient Fathers must have remarked with surprise, that on many occasions

S. Vincent Ferrerius; in a letter dated the 27th of July 1412, affirms that Antechrist was then already upon Earth, and that it had been acknowledged by many Devils, when forced by Exorcists to bear testimony to the truth. S. Jerom says that there will be no eclipses in the next world. S. Gregory of Nyssa is of opinion that the Angels in Heaven multiply, though not by any Carnal Commerce. S. Ireneus tells us that some disciples of S. John used to relate on the Apostle's authority, that our Blessed Saviour once said, in describing to them the glories of his eternal kingdom; that every vine should there produce 1000 branches; every branch, 1000 shoots; every shoot 1000 bunches of grapes; and that each grape should yield 25 measures of wine: moreover, that when the elect should go to gather one cluster, another would cry out, "gather me, I am a finer bunch."

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occasions they enter into such indecent discussions as would stain the most filthy page; as S. Cæsarius *loco citato*, S. Augustin *de nuptiis & concupis*: l. 2. c. 31. N. 53, S. Epiphanius *adversus hæres. lib 1. tom 2. hæ. 26*, S. Clement of Alexandria, *Pædagog*: and others. Even the chaste Jerom in some passages of his letters to his young female pupils is not always sufficiently delicate; though in one of his epistles to Eustochium he apologises for it by *mallem periclitari verecundiam quam pudicitiam*: which we apprehend is a very indifferent excuse, considering the circumstances of the person to whom it was addressed. In the discussion of such questions as that which is the subject of the present essay, it is indeed almost impossible to avoid every expression which may be more or less offensive to the modest sensibility of some readers; yet, not to expose myself to the same just reproach, it has been my study throughout to chuse such alone as were least liable to exception: and in the quotations which I have been obliged to copy from other writers, I have generally endeavoured to soften as much as possible in the translation whatever I thought likely to alarm the most rigid virtue.

bunch." S. Justin, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Lactantius, S. Ambrose, &c, thought that the Angels were fathers to the *giants* mentioned in Genesis. Clem. Alexan. *lib 3, pedagog.* teaches us that a man may clip, indeed, but not entirely cut off his beard, *for that would be a filthy sight*: that it is unlawful to pluck out the hairs of the head, because *Matt. xvi*, we are assured that God has taken an account of them all: that no one is allowed to change the colour of his hair, because it is said, *Matt. v.* that we can neither make it black nor white: - - - with many other doctrines equally curious and conclusive. And in another place, (*lib. 3, Strom*) he says that the Angels fell from happiness by reason of their incontinence: that they became in love with mortal women, and discovered to them all the secrets they had learned in Heaven. See Calmet *passim*. From all which we may conclude that though by the *grace* of God many of these persons were virtuous men; yet by this alone, they never were made philosophers: nor is it fit that the persuasion of their sanctity should perpetuate their prejudices. It will be said, that however they may have been mistaken in the above mentioned unessential points, Almighty God would never have permitted them, at least, so universally to be led astray with such prejudices as were likely to prove prejudicial to the genuine idea of the Christian Religion in after ages: but this is an illusion. We are on all occasions referred to the Scripture to settle our belief: if therefore



we follow implicitly other guides, we must attribute our deception to our own imprudence. From the same prejudicated notion arises the implicit faith which is by some *pious* Christians still given to the miracles related by these respectable writers, in opposition to every idea we can form of the providence of Almighty God, or even of his existence. Thus S. Jerom tells us seriously in the life of S. Paul, that this Saint met in the desert an animal composed of an horse and a human being, which fled away at the sign of the Cross. He relates *tom. 4, pag. 76*, that S. Hilarion one night heard the plaintive cries of infants, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of oxen, the lamentations of women, the roarings of lions : --- And that he saw by Moon-light a chariot and foaming steeds swallowed up in a gaping chasm of the Earth, upon his invoking the name of Jesus: all which, says he, were but so many contrivances of the Devil.—What S. Athanasius records in the life of S. Anthony, is no less marvellous; or Cassian, in his conferences. S. Gregory of Nyssa, in the life of his namesake the Thaumaturgus, talks of an hideous murdering Devil that used to haunt the public baths; and relates such ridiculous stories of him as are only fit to amuse the credulity of children. He tells us that S. Julian with the sign of the cross destroyed a great dragon which was going to devour him alive:—that S. Aphraates cured by miracle the Emperor's favourite horse, of a difficulty of staling:—that S. Macedonius restored to health a man who used to eat thirty pullets a day; and a variety of other such like



tales, which vilify religion. A curious collection of the like impertinencies may be seen in S. Gregory's *Dialogues*, the *Lives of the Saints* by S. Gregory of Tours, &c. &c. &c. Now all these incredible fictions Almighty God has permitted the *Saints* to record, men who are preconised as persons of solid learning, not credulous, incapable of any wilful deceit themselves, and not liable to be misled by others; especially as they often relate recent facts, corroborated by the testimony of many holy persons. Yet it is to be hoped that there are but few, in these days, who give any credit to such relations (a). Why then should their authorities

(a) In an enlightened age, says Lord Kaimes *Sketches* l. 3, superstition is confined amongst the vulgar; but, in an age of superstition, men of the greatest judgment are infected. Thus, the great Duke of Sully reports as a truth that the Dutch-ess of Beaufort made a compact with the Devil, to engage the love of Henry the IV of France. James Howel, a man eminent for knowledge, who died in 1666, relates as an undoubted fact, that the Devil enticed with a bagpipe all the rats out of the town of Hamelen. and forced them to drown themselves in a lake. Napier, the ingenious inventor of logarithms, named the very day of *final judgment* which he found predicted in the Revelations of S. John; though unfortunately for his credit, he survived it. Pastorini, one of the greatest mathematicians of this age, and, his religious enthusiasm apart, one of the best of men, has shewn us in a late curious, though illiberal romance (*The general history of the Christian Church*, &c. 1771), that the Apostle has in the same Revelations foretold the destruction of all the Protestant states before the year 1835; and threatens all the reformed throughout the world with the severest judgments of Heaven, &c. Now if men of the greatest abilities have thus imposed on themselves and others, what can we expect from many other historians more credulous and less enlightened? so Phlegon assures us that at Tralles, a City of Asia in which he had at that time some command, a young woman, by name Philinnium, continued during six months after she had been dead and

authorities be greater in other matters, where having fewer data given to proceed on, greater prejudices to combat, and a much greater likelihood of being misled,

and buried, to visit her lover who kept an inn in the same place, and used constantly to eat, drink, and sleep with him; till being discovered by her father and mother, she again expired on her lover's bed: for the truth of which he appeals to ocular witnesses then living. *Trithemius*, Abbot of S. James at Wirtzburg in 1516, tells us in his *Annales Hirsaugienses ad An. 1130*, a long tale of a spirit called *Heidekind* who appeared during a considerable time in the Diocese of Hildesheim, in Saxony, and frequented the Bishop's kitchen, where he sometimes rendered himself very useful, and at others played the most unaccountable and cruel pranks; till the Bishop forced him by repeated exorcisms to leave his diocese, &c. &c. &c.—Why should not the ancient fathers be equally liable to be misled by the prejudices of the times in which they lived, and of the systems in which they had been educated, or which they had embraced? Even in these later ages the *miracles* wrought at the tomb of the Deacon Paris have been credited by thousands (see the writings of Montgeron on this subject); and many relations of possessions, obessions, witchcraft, apparitions, spirits, hobgoblins, &c. seem so well authenticated, have been attested by so many learned and respectable witnesses, the reality of them has been established by so many monuments raised to perpetuate the memory of them to succeeding generations, that we must either totally reject them all and attribute them to the prejudices or ignorance of the times in which these comic farces are supposed to have been acted; or determine at once to give up our reason, and renounce that precious gift by which we are distinguished from the brute creation. Whoever will consult the *Histoire des Diables de Loudun* in 12 Amsterdam 1693, by Aubin; the *Examen et discussion Critique de l' Histoire des Diables de Loudun, de la Possession des Religieuses Ursulines, &c.* by M. de la Menardaye, 1749; The *Verité des Miracles opérés par L' Intercession de Monsieur Paris*, by M. de Montgeron; The *Traité sur les Apparitions des Esprits, & sur les Vampires, &c.* by Dom Calmet, 2 vol. 12, 1751, will certainly be of the same opinion; and if they have any taste for such marvellous stories, will meet with no small entertainment in the perusal of these works.

led, they more than probably have been equally mistaken?—But to proceed.

Again, it is objected from 2 *Tim.* 24, That “No man who warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this world, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier:” whence it is concluded that a minister of the Gospel, a soldier of Jesus Christ, should not marry. Whether this advice of the Apostle is more attended to in Roman Catholic countries by the unmarried Clergy, than by the married in England, I know not. This is certain; that having no family concerns at home, they too often meddle in the private concerns of others: and their influence is frequently exerted even in the cabinets of Kings and Princes; not to mention the party cabals and intrigues which almost universally display themselves on a less splendid theatre, in Abbeys, Colleges, and Convents. It will be replied that this is an abuse: I acknowledge that it is a great one. But would this subsist in an equal degree, if the Clergy had families of their own? The time they could spare from the duties of their state would then be usefully employed to the benefit of their neighbour; not in idle speculations, low jealousies, or intermeddling in the affairs of others. Such ties would connect them more with society, and render them in general not only better citizens, but better men. To this exclusion from the sweets of female converse, and an habitual uneasiness of mind contracted in solitude is owing that unforgiving temper,  
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that narrowness of soul, that illiberality of sentiment, that positiveness and obstinacy, that peevish disposition, that selfishness, &c. which are frequently reproached to Priests in Roman Catholic countries, and frequently not without justice. A man who is not pleased within himself, will seldom either *give* satisfaction to, or *be* satisfied with others (a).

The question which the virgin made to the angel (*Luke i, 34*) when he came to announce to her that she was to be the Mother of the Saviour of the world, is also cited in favour of a continent state, and as a proof that it was at all times practised and revered. *How shall this be*, said Mary, *seeing I know not man?* From these words some argue that she was under a vow of continence; otherwise her answer would be trifling and illusory. Indeed, though she had not hitherto known a man, yet as she was going to be married, she might with reason expect to be a mother: and this, could we give no other account of her expression, would rather prove that she was ignorant of the famous prophecy of Isaiah, *behold a VIRGIN shall conceive*. But continency in those days was unknown; virginity a disgrace; as

(a) We may, in some degree, make the same remark with respect to these, that Clém. Alex. *lib. 3, Strom*, makes of those who abstain from marriage through an apprehension of encountering the difficulties which accompany that state. They fall, says he, into a savageness of manners, and a detestation of their fellow creatures; and are unmindful of the primary duties of society. "Aliqui pretextu matrimonii difficultatum ab eo abstinēt, non convenienter sanctæ cognitioni. Ad inhumanitatem et odium hominum defluerunt, et perit apud ipsos caritas."



As we see in the case of the daughter of Jephtha who so bitterly lamented that she was condemned to it by her imprudent Father; *Judg. xi, 47*. “Parmi ce peuple *says Dom Calmet*, le celibat & la virginité, bien loin d’être en honneur, étoient regardés comme un malheur, et une espece de malediction.” Now if the Mother of our Saviour wished to remain a virgin, why did she marry? Was it for this that marriage was originally instituted; that the state was blessed; *Genes. i. 22*? Is any such thing insinuated in the Gospel? Mary perceived from the Angel’s words that she was immediately to conceive, and was probably greatly abashed both at his sudden appearance, and at his salutation. She was then only betrothed, and not married; and might not immediately comprehend that this Son of whom the Angel spoke, was to be the great EMMANUEL or the MESSIAH. Her answer was therefore the natural expression of innocence, surprise, and modesty. The truth seems to be, that her esteem and veneration for S. Joseph had made her consent to become his wife, not to be left in *disgrace*, as Elizabeth calls it, *Luke i. 25*; Rachel, *Gen. xxx, 23*; and as it was then generally esteemed; see *Isaiab iv, 1*, and *Deut. vii, 14*. But Almighty God had other views: and though she was now only betrothed, the Angel sometime after bad Joseph to take her as his wife. He had before addressed her as a virtuous aimable woman, with the design of being a father, as S. Augustin with reason conjectures, where he says, “Nec istam (Mariam) quæsisset, si necessariam uxorem non haberet,”

beret" (see *Tillemont*, in the life of the *Virgin Mary*); but from the moment that he knew the mystery, treated her with respect; and out of veneration for her being thus elected, probably behaved to her ever after as a father, a guardian, and protector. Epiphanius says that S. Joseph was a man rather advanced in years, and that the Virgin was extremely young. He assures us that S. James, S. Simeon, S. Jude, Mary, and Salome, were the children of Joseph by a former marriage: and S. Hilary, Eusebius, S. Gregory of Nyssa, S. Ambrose, and S. Chrysostom seem of the same opinion. See *Tillemont*. However this may be, Mary stood in need of the counsel and assistance of a prudent man; and had she not been *married*, was liable to death by the Jewish law<sup>(a)</sup>, which might perhaps have been urged against her by such as neither knew her virtue, nor the mystery which was wrought in her. As for her part, she undoubtedly perceived from some circumstances of the Angel's appearance that she was addressed by a Celestial spirit. She doubted not of the truth of his words, but yet comprehended not their full import: and in a modest confusion, she hastily answered to assert her own integrity, with the consciousness of unaffected virtue, but with a very imperfect deliberation.

There is a passage in the Revelations of S. John (*chap. xiv, v. 4*) which has also been explained in favour of a single life, as if it affirmed that the hundred and forty thousand who had the name of the *Lamb* written on their foreheads, were, by a parti-

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(a) See *Deuteron. c. 22.*

cular privilege, permitted to follow him *because they were virgins*, or, had lead a *life of continence*. But this is a manifest perversion of the Apostle's meaning, as appears from a bare inspection of the text, where they are called *Virgins*, not in opposition to such as had lived in a married state, but to such who had sacrificed their virtue to their inordinate passions; who by *criminal* indulgencies had vitiated their morals, and *defiled* their souls (a). There is scarce a greater abuse in nature, than thus to obscure the truths of religion and introduce a new code of faith, by these false and arbitrary expositions of the sacred writings: yet nothing is more common. A dexterous or an ignorant teacher may by such arts as these establish any doctrine: a most unjustifiable practice, which has greatly injured the cause of Christianity, and is daily productive of infinite mischief.

*Matt. xix, v. 12*, It is said that "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven." This again is cited to establish the excellence of continency, which is from these words inferred to be of great assistance towards attaining *the kingdom of Heaven*. But we must remark that Christ speaks of times *past*, or present, without the least allusion to the Catholic *Encratites* of *future* ages. Nor is it unlikely but that he spoke of some who, not without a crime, might mutilate themselves to restrain the invincible propensity

(a) Dom Calmet and other interpreters suppose that the Apostle, in this place, alludes to such as had never abandoned the worship of the true God, and sacrificed to idols.

penfity they felt to wandering gratifications ; as was done by the great Origen, though upon a better motive, as well as by the French Clergyman who about forty years ago was, for the fame attempt, degraded by the Bifhop of Chalons (See *Memoires de Chirurgie, &c.* by Mr. Arnauld); and others. But it is much more probable that our Saviour alluded to fome who voluntarily abftained from marriage, that they might be more at liberty to accompany him in his *Apostolic* labours, or to fpread the Chriftian Religion in more diftant regions ; or fpoke merely in a figurative fense, of many who abftained from all *forbidden* and *unlawful* pleasures out of a principle of virtue and religion : for we have feen before that vows of continency were unheard of amongft the Jews. It may alfo bear another fense. The Jews objected to our Saviour that if a man was not allowed to difmifs his wife and take another, even upon any trifling difguft, (as was the doctrine of *Hillel*, *Akiba*, and other celebrated docters ; and fince our Savior's coming, of *Leo of Modena Cerem. Judaic parte 4, c. 6*), it were better not to marry at all : to which he answers, that this was never *lawful*, unlefs in cafes of adultery. All, fays he, do not take the law concerning divorces in this limited fense, but only the more folid and enlightened (v. 11) ; for it was the *original* inftitution of marriage, that each man fhould remain attached to *one* wife, *the virgin of his youth*. It may indeed appear otherwife to thofe who wifh for a greater indulgence ; yet they fhould confider that many, who out of various motives abftain from



every such connection even with *one* agreeable associate, are exposed to greater difficulties. For some men *are born eunuchs*; that is, are by nature of a cool dispassionate temperament, and rather averse to marriage: - - - Others, through a love of virtue, and steadiness of affection, have never sought to avail themselves of this *permission* or rather *practice* of divorce, but have confined themselves to the *spirit* of the law (see *Proverbs* v, 18), that they might not countenance these too prevalent abuses. Let those, therefore, who know how the law of marriage was settled in the beginning, never depart from its original institution, nor seek to indulge an inconstant passion (*a*).

Indeed, a general law of celibacy seems hard to be imposed on all such as are willing to embrace the ecclesiastical state: and though we were to allow that S. Paul wished it for *all mankind* in some degree, which is far from being evident; yet, we see he acknowledges that it was not, nor could be the gift of every man, since he tells us that each has *his proper gift*. Now from what has been already said, can we imagine this gift  
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(*a*) Of these various interpretations let the reader chuse that which he thinks most natural after a fair and deliberate consideration of the passage. This is a rule to which every Christian Expositor should sincerely endeavour to conform. There are many texts in scripture regarding unessential points, the sense of which it will ever be difficult to determine: but it is never lawful to wrest any passage from its *obvious* or *probable* meaning to one that is evidently less natural, with a view of authorising any particular system which we may chance to have adopted.

so generally bestowed to all who engage in a life of celibacy, even from the best of motives? The extraordinary methods which have oftentimes been taken by the best of men to subdue nature and counteract its most innocent feelings, shew that it is not *easy*, and the occasional *fall* of many evinces that it scarce is *possible* for some individuals to persevere in a single life: would it not therefore be greatly better for the glory of God and the good of society, that this ecclesiastical institution should be set aside? for I appeal to every person of observation, whether in every country where this establishment prevails, it is not still productive of the greatest evils, either to the scandal of the Church, or the unhappiness of individuals. There are, doubtless, many thousands amongst the foreign Clergy who live in perfect continence; some with few solicitations to infringe the law, and others not without perpetual struggles which render them objects worthy of compassion: but is it not also true that there are thousands who daily fall, and many, otherwise valuable subjects, whose life is but a scene of repeated sinning and repenting?

As we cannot imagine that every youth has a vocation from Heaven to serve Almighty God precisely in that order of men amongst whom he has chanced to receive his education; it evidently appears how partial the motives of many are, which engage them in a religious, or clerical state. Thus we seldom see the pupil of a *Benedictin*, for example,

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engage amongst the *Dominicians* or *Franciscans*; or a student in a *secular* colledge, engage amongst the *Regulars*. The ideas of an easy life, an honourable calling, a certain and comfortable maintenance, or some partial friendship, are the inducements which usually fix their determinations. When by making a vow of poverty, a man is for ever secured from want, becomes entitled to a genteel provision for life, and has even a chance of rising to a state of affluence and grandeur, we should be allowed to suppose that these considerations will probably not be overlooked in the choice of a state of life; for these are comfortable reflexions to young men who are often taken from the lowest class of citizens, and by whom the convents are chiefly filled. The like advantages are also reaped, in great measure, by such as engage amongst the secular Clergy: Thus celibacy is embraced, because it is the road that leads to preferment; and its merits continue to be extolled, because in Roman Catholic countries it is the profession of so numerous a body of men, whose interest and wish it is to have the calling looked upon as sacred. Violence is, indeed, seldom used to engage young persons in these societies; but persuasions and prejudices are frequently their chief inducement<sup>(a)</sup>.

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(a) Their case is often similar to that of the young lady whose brother Erasmus undertakes (*de Epif. Conf.*) to dissuade from engaging in a life of celibacy; and they are often equally to be pitied. “*Detur hæc venia sexui, says he, detur ætati: let this false step be pardoned by reason of her sex, by reason of her age. Puella dolore Victa (at the death of her mother) peccavit: stultarum muliercularum, aut stultorum monachorum impulsu sese precipitem dedit.*”

The lives of the conventuals abroad are mostly regular (I chiefly speak of those who are not obliged to roam about in quest of a precarious subsistence), and entirely free from those crying abuses with which ignorance or calumny have often charged them. Every essential breach of discipline which comes to light, is most severely punished. But what severities can always prevent the secret ravages occasioned by a life of constraint so contrary to nature? Yet it is no less true that they are generally indolent and listless, and actuated in their every pursuit and their whole conduct, by all the little passions of narrow contracted minds. Amongst the religious women there is usually much more happiness than in convents of the other sex. When from their tender years they have been brought up to a life of piety, and have carefully been preserved from the society of men; from conversations, books, and objects, which awaken the senses, and inflame the passions: they mostly continue happy and content, and are satisfied with that degree of tranquillity, and those innocent enjoyments which they meet with in these retreats. The full persuasion that their profession is holy(a), and such as in a future life will be rewarded

(a) It is a doctrine universally taught amongst the *Religious* in Roman Catholic countries, that a solemn profession in an approved order is equal to a second baptism, and effaces every former sin both as to the guilt, and to the punishment: or, in other words, that if a person was to die immediately after he had pronounced his vows, he would instantly be received into the mansions of eternal happiness, as if he had never forfeited his baptismal integrity. Nay some have even maintained that as often as a Religious person thinks on his

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rewarded with a special crown, supports their fervour : and the dismal relations they often hear, with too much truth, of the corruptions of the world, attach them still more strongly to their solitudes. But their notions of perfection, as well as of the duties of beings destined to live in society, are very confined : and their religion consists chiefly in reciting a long daily task of prayers in a language which they seldom understand ; and in all the trifling practices of misjudged devotion. When an Ægyptian solitary, says Fleury (*Dis. sur L'hist. Ecc.*), was making baskets, it was easy to see that he did not lose his time ; but God only knows how they are employed, who with their arms across remain an hour or two upon their knees. Yet this indolent and equivocal devotion is that which has been chiefly practised during the five last centuries. “ The lives of the Saints of these later ages, continues this judicious writer, as S. Bridget, S. Catherine of Sienna, &c. contain little more than their own thoughts or sayings. They employed most of their time in giving their confessors an account of their interior : and these Directors --- easily mistook the *reveries* of their penitents for *revelations*, and every extraordinary thing that happened to them, for a miracle(*a*).” We may with truth affirm the same of

vows with pleasure, and virtually renews them, he gains a plenary indulgence.—The effect which such a persuasion is likely to produce in young unexperienced minds is too obvious to stand in need of comment.

(*a*) It is a remark of Gregory the Great (*Hom. 1 in Ezech*) that many holy persons were occasionally subject to such illusions.

of the *living Saints* who still inhabit the nunneries abroad: and were it not an odious, as well as an useless digression, it would not be difficult to shew that the age of miracles and supernatural gifts is not yet elapsed; and that there are, even in these latter days, several of the foreign convents whose *sons and daughters prophecy*, whose young ones continue to *see visions*, and whose *old men* (and women) still *dream dreams*. (a)

From familiar abuses spring the nice distinctions of a *purgative*, an *illuminative*, and an *unitive* state, with the whole system of mystic theology, full of the most unintelligible jargon, so curiously delineated in the writings of modern spiritualists, and to much

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sions. “*Aliquando sancti, says he, quædam ex suo spiritu proferunt, et hæc se dicere ex Prophetiæ spiritu suspicantur.*” Fleury seems to be of the same opinion, and ascribes the far greater part of these visions and revelations to a lively imagination, heated and warped by too long prayers and extraordinary austerities. S. Catherine however, notwithstanding her *contemplative* life, found means to take a very *active* part in the affairs of the times during the schism which afflicted the Church of Rome in her days. The *Urbanists* attributed to her merits, every advantage which they gained over the *Clementines*; and in reality, she appeared very steadfast to their cause. She was perpetually writing in favour of Pope Urban, to excite the Christian Princes to take arms in his support, whilst she treated the Cardinals who sided with his opponent, as so many *incarnate Devils*. See her works printed at Lucca and Sienna in 1713 in four volumes 4to.

(a) Many of the *Good Gentlemen* who have received their education at Liege, Bruges, &c. could, if they pleased, bear witness to the truth of this assertion. But they will doubtless be unwilling to expose their fair enthusiasts to the derision of *Heretics and Unbelievers*.

cried up as leading to the summit of Christian perfection(a). These exotic conceits which are frequently instilled into their young votaries before they are of an age to distinguish the illusion, however opposite to every idea of rational worship, often introduce the most puerile observances under the notion of *tender piety*, and bring on an habit of scruples and apprehensions totally destructive of all inward peace. It must therefore be acknowledged that it would be much better for the advancement of real virtue, that they should return to the *adoration in spirit and truth*, and be taught, even in early life, a simple and solid method of prayer conceived in the language of the sacred Scriptures, and founded on divine truths, not on scholastic opinions, fabulous histories, or the flighty imaginations of enthusiasts.

Some similar establishments to those of which we are here treating, might, if under proper regulations be rendered of acknowledged utility both to individuals, and to society : but they should only be considered as a temporary refuge, and not be enforced

(a) See the works of S. Theresa; *The dark Night of the Soul*, *The Bright Flames of Love*, *The Ascent to Mount Carmel*, &c. by her friend S. John a Cruce; *The Revelations of S. Gertrude*, *The Mystical City of God* by Mary of Agreda; the works of *John Rusbroech*; the *Reveries of Mary a la Coque*, &c. The life of this last mentioned visionary was given to the public in 1729 by *Languet* Doctor of Sorbonne, and Bishop of Soissons. It is a medley of blasphemy and nonsense. We find from this spiritual novel, not only that Jesus Christ used frequently to converse with her in the stile of Father Berruyer's Patriarchs; but that he even condescended to compose verses for her amusement.

forced by irrevocable engagements. Peculiar circumstances may render a few such asylums desirable in every country ; but they should not be too much multiplied, nor encouraged : and these various fugitives from society, whatever their motives be supposed, should never be permitted to devote themselves for ever to a state to which they may not always have an equal inclination.

This is, I think, a pretty exact account of the situation of those ladies in Roman Catholic countries who retire from the world to bury themselves in cloysters. However, the condition of Religious persons of the other sex is totally different ; except in those orders which are entirely separated from all communication with society. This was indeed the original idea of all such institutions : and it has been remarked, that they have always degenerated in proportion to the changes that have been introduced in this primitive scheme of a monastic life. But in other orders, where the duties of their state as determined by their present discipline and constitutions, oblige the subjects to have frequent communication with society ; where their studies and their views, though perhaps indifferently calculated to answer the proposed end, are aimed to be directed to the service of the community, and where they are in some degree exposed to the allurements of the world, the case is, as I said, entirely different. Unhappiness and discontent in many subjects seem almost inseparable from the state. Being taught to shun the insidious pleasures of the world ; the most inno-



cent of its enjoyments are considered to include at least some degree of criminality(a). Besides, their studies and occupations, the high-flown conceits of their spiritualists and quibbling doctrines of their theologians fill their minds with gloomy ideas, and contracted notions both of men and things: and the tyranny and injustice with which they are often treated by superiors, contribute to sower their temper, and render their situation irksome. Thus, if they do indeed persevere in leading a life undefiled by the grosser vices, yet it is without any rational enjoyment; and sometimes under a full conviction of the galling yoke they are obliged to bear. It is not meant to insinuate by this, that this state renders all those who profess it essentially miserable, or essentially indolent. There are many valuable and learned men to be found in these solitary retreats who have edified the world by their lives, and improved it by their writings: there are some who happily struggle with, and surmount the obstacles which to others are almost insuperable: nor do I deny but there are several who are happy in their station,

(a) This surely must be an illusion of the grossest nature. The world was certainly made to be enjoyed; and it is both a ridiculous and a criminal ambition in man to imagine other systems than those which are traced out to him by the hand of his Beneficent Creator. To suppose that a snare to his virtue is concealed in every blessing, or that a moderate use of the good things of this life is incompatible with the hopes of a future more compleat enjoyment, is a bitter reflection upon the designs of the Almighty. What an ungrateful return to Heaven for all its gifts, to say that life is ornamented with such delightful scenes that virtue cannot resist the solicitations of unlawful pleasure!

station, which is not every where without its comforts. This depends on peculiar habits of mind and a variety of other circumstances; yet, I believe that the case is pretty generally such as I have here endeavoured to represent it.

I acknowledge this to be owing to many other causes besides that of being excluded from the comforts of the marriage state, and the endearing society of that other self who even in a state of innocence was given to man to be his companion and assistant; as may be gathered from the remarks I have made above. Yet, in many subjects, this is a principle obstruction to their happiness. I know that, in this respect, the wants of man are not merely physical. As Rousseau observes; "Unless our inclinations have been vitiated by the prejudices of an indiscreet education, and are become resistless by the fatal errors of a disorderly youth, these difficulties are often of our own creation. It is imagination alone which commonly awakes the senses, and the want of will which, in many, constitutes their weakness. The bent of passion is not absolutely unconquerable till we have acquired the unfortunate habit of yielding to its impulse; and the great art of preserving the mind from the dangerous allurements of pleasure, is chiefly the flight of such occasions as may corrupt it, even by imperceptible degrees." Notwithstanding which observations it will be found that in many thousands, nature, at one period or other will have her rights; and those who obstinately  
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strive to resist her calls, will generally become the victims of their imprudence.(a)

But granting that all men can contain, the thing abstractedly considered, by using *vast* precautions and embracing *extraordinary* means; yet, considering the general inclinations of mankind, and the actual state of the world, if there is not a physical, there is at least a moral impossibility that a life of celibacy should be persevered in, unless by a very few individuals, without infinite abuse(b). Whatsoever we ask for, says the sacred Scripture, God will give us. But must we infer from hence that all may ask for, and will obtain the power of working miracles, of curing diseases, and other such extraordinary gifts? If necessary to the salvation of a soul, the edification of the church, or the establishment of the true religion, such favours might be granted; but not to support unnecessary undertakings, or to keep off the assaults of passion, while  
other

(a) They will be perhaps obliged at length to acknowledge with Erasmus, that the marriage state, where its duties are religiously observed, is of all others the most holy. "Let the Monks and Nuns, *says he*, applaud their institute, let them boast ever so much of their ceremonies and various observances, which are the chief things that distinguish them from the rest of mankind; matrimony when purely and chastely observed, is, after all, the most sacred calling in life." Riches and a house to dwell in, according to the wise man's remark, *Prov.* 10, are given by our parents; but a prudent wife is the gift of the Lord: that is, though he is the giver of all good gifts (*Ep. Jacob.* i. 17), Yet this, as the most precious of all, is in a particular manner derived from him.

(b) S. Ignatius tells us *Epist. ad Antiochen*: that "This state is dangerous and hard to persevere in, especially when we are obliged to it: *periculosa res est Virginitas, quamque servare difficile est, maxime cum ex necessitate fit.*"

other natural means are not only allowed of, but recommended, 1 *to the Cor.* vii, 2. It is a presumption and tempting God to neglect those means which he appoints, and depend upon a relief he never has promised to afford. For it is ridiculous to suppose that a mere desire of serving God in a state of celibacy, and an actual undertaking of it through an injudicious zeal, is a sufficient reason to oblige him to suspend the laws of nature, and alter the very frame of man<sup>(a)</sup>.

Moreover, this state is usually embraced at a time of life in which a young man brought up in innocence and at a distance from all allurements, is totally unacquainted both with his own constitution, and the nature of the obligation he takes upon him<sup>(b)</sup>. It would, therefore, be far safer and more expedient, not to engage for ever to observe what he knows not whether in future life he may find it, morally speaking, in his power to comply with. Hence, though a profession of continency in some  
may

(a) "Naturæ hæc lex est, *says Erasmus*, --- cui qui non paret, ne homo quidem sit estimandus, nedum bonus civis." And in another place, when he supposes the objection, that we ought rather to comply with the calls of virtue, than those of nature, he totally rejects this idea, and exclaims, "Perinde quasi virtus sit ulla dicenda, quæ cum natura pugnat! as if any thing can be called virtue, which is contrary to nature."

(b) This must certainly, in some degree at least, diminish the value of their sacrifice. Such was the idea of *Clem. Alex.* who says, *lib. 3, Strom.* that it is but a trivial offering to abstain from those enjoyments with which we are unacquainted. "Res est maxima cum quis eam (voluptatem) expertus fuerit, deinde abstinere: quid enim magnum, si quis se continet ab iis quæ non novit?"



may be allowable, and advisable to a small number of others; yet whoever first endeavoured to make these engagements inévocable, rendered a very unfriendly service to mankind. The various misfortunes arising from it, the feeble pretences on which it is founded, the disapprobation of many valuable men, and the necessity of some alteration in this law, must evidently appear to all who have perused the foregoing sheets with any degree of attention, and who have sought to silence every prejudice that they might give the subject a fair and impartial discussion.

It may not be improper to give in this place a succinct account of those establishments which in different ages of the Church have so greatly contributed to perpetuate the praises, and obligation of a single life. Though of little importance to the generality of those into whose hands this essay may chance to fall; It may, perhaps be of some utility to others, who may think themselves more nearly interested in the subjects which are here discussed. And, if it tends but to remove one prejudice from the mind of a fellow citizen, the indulgent reader who stands in no need of such information to settle his ideas on these matters, will, I am confident, readily allow the expediency of this digression.

The disorder and confusion which were occasioned by the civil dissensions that took place soon after the establishment of Christianity, and the persecutions inflicted on such as adhered to this Religion, were the first causes that gave rise to the monastic

nastic state in the *East*: and in the *West*, the hostile incursions of the northern nations, together with the various prejudices which we have detailed in the foregoing parts of this essay, persuaded those who loved tranquillity, or aspired to the fancied summit of perfection, to take refuge in the cloyster. Thus Anthony retired into the desert under the persecution of Decius, Paul under that of Aurelian; and the disciples of these two renowned hermits multiplied apace during those of Dioclesian, Galerius, Maximinus, and Licinius. We must however observe that this institution was chiefly introduced by the *Ægyptians*, men of ardent genius, inhabiting a country distinguished both by the heats of its climate, and the forests with which it abounded, and which were well calculated to afford a shelter to these solitaries. We may moreover remark that their chief austerities consisted only in a constant perseverance in one regular and uniform way of life; and that they were unacquainted with the extravagant practices of piety which were observed by the Syrian Monks. To whatever motives we ascribe this infatuation of the first Anchorets, whether political or religious; certain it is that their numbers were great beyond conception. In Egypt alone, before the end of the fourth century, there were above seventy six thousand of these solitaries: and Cassian speaks of a City called *Oxyrinus*, in which there were ten thousand virgins, and twenty thousand Monks, living together under the same rules, and observing the same discipline. The lives of these ancient recluses were

so austere, that Benedict who wrote his monastic rule in 530, pretends by no means to give it as a model of perfection, but only as a mere introduction to a perfect life, inferior by far to what was practised in former ages. The idea which now began to be formed of a virtuous Christian, represented him as a mere passive being, whose thoughts were solely to be employed on Heaven, and whose duty it was not only to renounce this world with all its vices and its follies, but even its most rational comforts and enjoyments. This evidently appears from the writings of all who have treated on a religious life. Under the influence of this prejudice, which still too much prevails in an extensive portion of the Christian world, it is no wonder that so many continue to devote themselves to solitude. When once a person has impressed his mind with an idea that the life of a Christian should be a life of rigour and self denial, in this literal sense, he is easily induced to abandon a world which can afford him no enjoyment; and buries himself in the gloomy recesses of a convent, to practise those virtues which elsewhere would inevitably expose him to ridicule and contempt.(a)

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(a) There is a passage in S. Matthew's Gospel which is often adduced in favour of what are usually called the *Evangelical Counsels*: but this is evidently perverting the sense of our Blessed Saviour's words. The life of a Christian in society, who faithfully complies, to the utmost of his abilities, with all his various duties to God, his neighbour, and himself, is certainly the most perfect of all systems; since all mankind are equally called to a life of perfect virtue, and this is the only system to which the Gospel ever directs us, in order to attain it



The fermentation which was occasioned in weak minds, prove to novelty and enthusiasm, by the recital of the virtues of these solitaries preconised by such as occasionally visited them in their retreats, was of great assistance to those savage colonies; and added daily to their numbers whole crouds of infatuated votaries. Silence, submission, and contemplation were the occupation of their lives. The most innocent propensities of nature were esteemed highly criminal; and it was imagined a duty to enervate the body, in order to invigorate the faculties

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it. Those who endeavour to establish their favourite prejudices upon the words of Scripture, relate the history as follows. "The young man, say they, who *Matt. 19*, asked our Saviour what he must do to obtain everlasting life, received for answer that he must keep the commandments: to which when he had replied that he had from his infancy been ever faithful to all the duties of Religion, our Blessed Redeemer subjoined, *If thou wilt be perfect, then go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor - - then come and follow me.* He therefore advised him, continue these same interpreters, to embrace a state of *voluntary poverty*, as the full completion and perfection of the law." But the least attention to the text will shew how foreign this is from the real sense of the Evangelist; particularly if we observe on what occasion, and in what circumstances this was spoken. It will then appear that if our Saviour advised the young man to *sell* his possessions, it only was, that he might be at liberty to *follow him*. He called him to be amongst the number of those who were in a special manner appointed to be the ministers of his word, to spread and promulgate the Christian law. However perfect and religious he might be; if his affairs kept him connected with his friends at home, he could not be fit to carry the Gospel into distant countries: he could not give himself entirely up to the duties of an Apostle ever prepared to die in defence of the doctrines he taught, and unconnected with others, perhaps infant babes or a tender disconsolate wife, from whom he might by the violence of persecution be suddenly snatched away, when most they wanted his counsel or protection.

This



of the soul. They treated it as an enemy against whom they were to wage a constant war. Their days were devoted to tears, and the ingenious art of torturing their bodies in various manners: and they forgot that the chastisements of which the Apostle speaks 1 Cor. 9, were such as never diminished his attention to the service of his neighbour, or the duties he owed to society. For, if he taught that we should *mourn with those who are in grief*; he also advises us to *rejoice with those who laugh*: Rom. 12. This however could not be practised by men whose bodies were emaciated by constant fasting, and want of sleep; who, from a desire of pleasing

This man, says the Evangelist *went away sorrowful, because he had many riches*. His riches alone would not have prevented his salvation: therefore, from our Saviour's reflections after he was departed, we may not improbably conjecture that his conduct was not so irreproachable as he pretended. His possessions were likely what occasioned him to offend; in which case it would certainly be more perfect to relinquish them. But the comfortable enjoyment of the blessings of Heaven with a grateful heart, is, in other cases, certainly preferable either to the splendid poverty which is embraced in an opulent abbey, or to the craving dissatisfied state of an indigent conventual. This was the sense in which Saint Clement of Alexandria (*L. 3, Strom.*) understood the reply of Christ. He says that Christ gave this advice to the young man because he was hard-hearted to the poor, and never distributed assistance to the indigent. "*Honeste non prohibuit esse divitem, says that father, sed esse divitem injuste et in-explebiliter.*" Happy would it have been for society if Francis of Assysium had tortured it to no other meaning. In exhorting us to renounce our possessions, says Fleury (*Dis. sur l'his. Ecc.*), our blessed Saviour only meant that we must struggle against those passions to which riches often give rise. Poverty is an obstacle to virtue, and a source of many violent temptations: *riches and poverty give me not*, says the wise man.

sing Heaven, were bound in iron chains, or tormented by the points of needles, which from the same good motive they often inserted in the hair shirts which they wore next to their flesh. For we see in the history of their lives, that they vied with each other in discovering daily new arts of torture, and in exhibiting such outrageous efforts of intemperate zeal as can scarce be credited. Thus *Macarius* of Alexandria went in disguise to Tabenna, where he practised such extraordinary austerities, that the children of *Pacomius* grew jealous of their unknown guest, and obliged their father to dismiss him from their community. Whoever petitioned to be admitted a fellow sufferer with these misguided enthusiasts, was previously obliged to give the most signal proofs that he had absolutely vanquished all the feelings of humanity; and they imagined that they did an honour to the Deity, by disfiguring the most excellent piece of his workmanship. Notwithstanding this, if we may believe *S. Jerom*, *Basil*, *Athanasius*, and other Panegyriste who have celebrated the virtues of these solitaries, all nature was subject to their power: and upon the most trivial occasions, frequently without even the least pretence of utility, its most invariable laws were suspended or broken through as these holy men thought proper to direct. Their miracles were greater far than those ascribed by the Evangelists to the first planters of the Christian Faith, or even to Christ himself.—So *Macarius* restored sight to a little blind Hyena, whose dam, on the following day,

day, grateful for the benefit received, presented the Saint with the skin of a Sheep which she had devoured, to make him a comfortable garment. This he for some time refused to accept of, because, as he argued with the beast, it must have been procured by stealth, as she possessed no flocks of her own; nor would he after all receive her offering till she had solemnly engaged never more to steal from a poor man. Theodoret relates that S. James of Nisibis passing by a fountain where some young women were washing their linen; because their heads were uncovered, and their cloaths tucked up, cursed both the fountain and the imprudent maids: in consequence of which the fountain vanished, and the jetty locks of the young damsels instantly became white as snow. Rufinus tells us that when Paul the *simple* once found a difficulty in expelling a Devil from a possessed person, he threatened that if he did not immediately depart, he would never eat again: upon which, *says he*, as if God was unwilling to displease a person so dear to him, the Devil was forced instantly to abandon his hold. S. Abraham was once insulted by the Devil, who to distress him endeavoured, while he was at dinner, to overturn the pitcher that contained his drink: but the *Saint* more adroit than *Satan*, supported it in such a manner with his hand till he had finished his meal, that the adversary's contrivances proved all abortive (*see S. Ephrem*).—As for the monkey-tricks which the Devils played with Pachomius and others to excite their laughter, or the



the ridiculous figures they assumed, and which we read so much of in the histories of these ages, they are really entertaining; as well as the temptations and battles of S. Anthony: and, as Mr. Gibbon somewhere observes, these relations want nothing but truth and common sense.(a)

### Another

(a) We cannot observe without a mixture of surprise and indignation, that in this enlightened age, many legends equally absurd are still retained in the *Breviaries* or *common-prayer books* actually used by the Clergy in Roman Catholic countries. That I may not be accused of advancing this without sufficient warrant, I will produce a few examples to justify the assertion, from amidst many others equally exceptionable and romantic.

When the disciples of S. *Felix Valesus* upon a certain occasion overslept themselves, by a particular disposition of Providence, *Deo sic disponente*, and did not rise to *mattins* at midnight, on the vigil of the nativity of the Virgin Mary; *Felix*, upon his going into the choir, found the Virgin Mother accompanied with other *Saints* from Heaven, all dressed in the habit peculiar to his order, sitting in the stalls ready to sing the *office*. Upon which he devoutly joined them, and the Virgin supplying the place of *Præcentor*, *Deipara præcinnente*, they performed together the whole night service in due form and ceremony.

The love which S. *Philip Neri* bore to Almighty God was so excessive, that there was not place sufficient in his body for his heart to act in: hence it was obliged to force up and break two of his lesser ribs, in order to expand his breast.

S. *Odo* forgetting once to eat up the crumbs of bread which he left at dinner, took them in his cowl sleeve, and went to his Abbot to beg pardon for this omission. When he unfolded his sleeve, behold, they were all found changed into pearls, which the superior immediately ordered to be sewed on the sacred vestments.

S. *Lawrence*, Archbishop of Canterbury, being about to leave the kingdom, ordered a bed to be prepared for him in the Church: but S. Peter came in the night time and whipped him very severely, *ad multam noctem*.

Jesus Christ once declared that he could not any where be found on Earth more readily than in the Blessed Sacrament  
of



Another kind of apparition with which they were often frightened, we can easily believe gave them really some disturbance. These were the spectres which haunted them under the figures of beautiful damsels. Without supposing any intervention of the Devil, it may easily be credited that such like

of the altar, and next to that in the heart of his beloved *S. Gertrude*. This Saint died rather of love, than any disease; and Christ appearing to her himself together with his Holy Mother, *S. John*, and a company of virgins, took up her soul to Heaven: but first by a wonderful unfolding or expansion of his breast, he carefully inclosed it in his sacred heart. *Christus ejus animam corporis solutam compagibus, ac mirabili pectoris explicatione intra cordis sui penetralia receptam, ad cœlestem thalamum traduxit.*

*S. Bonaventure* relates that a crucified Seraphim, fastened to a cross in the same manner as our Blessed Saviour was, appeared upon a certain occasion to *S. Francis*, and discoursed some time with him in a familiar manner. When the Angel vanished out of sight, the Saint found himself marked with an impression of our Saviour's wounds in his hands and feet, the heads of the nails appearing on one side, and the points on the other. In his breast he had a red scar or wound, which often pouring forth *his sacred blood* covered his drawers and tunic with stains.—He calls this *rem admirabilem* an extraordinary wonder, *et tantopere testatam*, yet fully attested. A feast instituted in remembrance of this miracle is held forth *urbi et orbi*, that is, ordered to be kept in the divine office over the whole Catholic Church.

*S. Catherine of Sienna* and *S. Catherine de Ricciis* are both said to have been favoured with an impression of these same sacred stigmata: although with respect to the former this is denied by the Franciscans who reject the pretensions of the Dominicans, and assert that this privilege was never granted to any but to *their holy patriarch*. This dispute was carried on with great warmth; and Pope Sixtus IV who had been a Cordelier before his promotion, at length forbid the miraculous stigmata to be represented in any pictures of *S. Catherine* which might be drawn in after ages.

These two Saints are likewise remarkable for having received from Christ an impression of a wedding ring, in token  
of

like phantoms did indeed frequently harass them: As they were ever cautioned against the pretended wiles of this *dangerous* sex; and therefore not only studiously avoided their company, but were under perpetual apprehensions of admitting them even into their thoughts; we cannot wonder that these struggles should produce a contrary effect, and frequently recall to their troubled and distempered minds (a)

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of their espousals to him. Of the latter it is observed in the Roman Breviary, that “supernorum charismatum copia singularis in ea enituit, annulo desponsationis, sacrisque stigmatibus, quæ non semel spectanda se exhibuerunt, acceptis.”

The face of *S. Rose of Lima*, when she was an infant, was once changed, in a most wonderful manner, into the shape and figure of a Rose: and at five years of age, she made a vow of perpetual virginity.

Other similar fictions, which I will only term *absurd*, although they may by many be esteemed to border near on *blasphemy*, are related in the offices of *S. S. Columban, Barbara, Andrew Avelinus, John a Cruce, Bridget, Simon Stock, Cuthbert, Alexius, Peter of Alcantara, Edmund, Theresa, Benedict, &c.* And it must be remembered that these pious stories are not collected from antiquated legends written in an age of ignorance and superstition, but from the office books now in use, which the secular or regular Clergy abroad are daily obliged to recite under grievous sin. — Where such romantic chronicles are believed, the very idea and intention of a true *miracle* is destroyed; as no character is left by which it can be distinguished from a forgery. Indeed they vilify Religion, and serve but to confound every notion which a rational mind can form of the attributes and operations, nay even of the existence of a Deity; and instead of promoting a spirit of piety, inevitably lead to incredulity and vice.

(a) *S. Jerom* acknowledges that he was acquainted with Anchorets of both sexes, whose brain was disordered by too long an abstinence from food. “Novi Ego ex utroque sexu per nimiam abstinenciam cercori sanitatem fuisse vexatam, præcipue in his qui in humectis et frigidis habitaverè cellulis.” *Lib. 2, Ep. 18.* In such a situation we cannot be surprised that

the very representations they so much dreaded, or which they were so studious to obliterate.

But, upon the whole, these were harmless and inoffensive men, when compared to those who succeeded them in after ages; who, under one pretext or other, often committed the greatest outrages in society, and spread a spirit of universal discord both in Church and state. Their ambition, or unenlightened zeal, sometimes carried them to the greatest extremities. For the austerities of religious retirement inspire, at best, but an inflexible haughty virtue; and under the sanction of Religion, every most unwarrantable attempt has, at different periods, been deemed lawful, and meritorious. So we see that even the great and virtuous Chrysostom was prompted by this intemperate spirit, to violate the most sacred laws of society, when in his homilies he gave scope to such outrageous invectives against his sovereign, whom, though ever so blameable, it was his duty to have respected. The conduct of the Empress Eudoxia, has, I know, been greatly censured on this occasion: but what will ever be considered by the unprejudiced as an instance of moderation in  
this

that they should in every point have embraced the most extraordinary notions. How much more consonant to reason would it have been, if instead of thus resigning their share of those enjoyments with which Providence has vouchsafed to sweeten our journey through life, and exclaiming at every suggestion of pleasure, however rational, *a Lion is in the way*; they had shewn by a grateful acceptance of these blessings, that they were not insensible to it's benevolent designs!—Besides, our fellow creatures have a right to be edified by our example, and to be improved by our virtues.

this despotic Princess, is, that she treated this assuming Prelate with so much indulgence, after he had said in one of his declamations to the people of Antioch, ever ripe for sedition, “ Yes, Jezabel still lives : she persecutes Elias. Herodias again demands the head of John.” These were the effects of the rigid maxims imbibed in solitude, even upon the greatest men. In others who with the same prejudices had stronger passions, or less virtue to counteract their influence, they were productive of far greater evils. During the religious disputes that for so many years afflicted the Christian Church, the Eutichian Monks made Syria a scene of desolation and rapine. In the affairs of Athanasius, and Cyril, when the animosities which subsisted amongst the Christians, and the tragic scenes occasioned by disputes on speculative and metaphysical points threw the whole world into confusion, the Monks also acted a very conspicuous part. In after ages, those of Italy, Spain, and Gaul, were as turbulent as their predecessors had been in Thebais and Syria. Dominic with two Franciscans, under pretext of zeal, headed an army of Fanatics against the inoffensive Waldenses, whom they inhumanly burnt or slaughtered *to procure their eternal salvation* : and the Abbot of Citeaux, the Pope’s Legate, was named Generalissimo of the army which massacred so many thousands of the Albigenes(a).

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(a) The Abbot of Citeaux was, however, not the only blood-thirsty zealot who took an active part in these inhuman



These were the dismal effects of fanatic zeal which when once escaped from the cloister, where it had been so deeply imbibed, set the whole world in flames. However, for the happiness of mankind, this spirit did not universally prevail. In the fifth age, when the Roman empire was distracted by internal divisions and over run by the incursions of barbarous nations, Benedict, a young man of good

man scenes; for the baneful influence of the doctrines and example of such-like Apostles of fanaticism quickly spreads through every rank of men. The Archbishops of Rheims, Bourdeaux, Sens, and Rouen; the Bishops of Autun, Clermont, Nevers, Bayeux, Limoges, Lisieux, and Chartres, as well as many other Ecclesiastics, headed up their respective corps, to fight the *battles of the Lord*. At Carcassone they threw four hundred of these Heretics into the flames; and when they had taken Beziers, into which many of these unfortunate men were fled, they cruelly massacred above sixty thousand inhabitants, without distinction of age or sex, and afterwards pillaged and set fire to the city. Seven thousand persons, says Pere Benoit, had taken refuge in the Church of S. Magdalen: but as soon as this was perceived, they were suddenly attacked by these lawless Crusaders, who committed such a slaughter amongst them, that not a single person escaped. The same severities were every where exercised by these deluded Bigots, who not only condemned, without pity, to the flames every unfortunate wretch who was so unhappy as to fall into their hands; but moreover ordered all the bodies of such of these *Heretics*, who had been buried in consecrated ground, to be dug up and reduced to ashes. The Valdenses in France, Bohemia, Germany, Piedmont, &c, met nearly with the same cruel fate. Lewis the XII in his way to Italy attacked them in one of their retreats called Valpulta, where he made so horrible a slaughter of them, that in memory of this *glorious* atchievement, he ordered the place afterwards to be called Val-Louise. It is impossible to read without shuddering the barbarous severities exercised against them in the time of Paul III, by the baron of Opede first president of the parliament of Aix, and the advocate general Guerin. For  
some

good family in the Dutchy of Spoleto, opened an asylum to such as were desirous to flee from these scenes of tumult, and retire to a life of tranquillity and peace. To these he prescribed a rule remarkable for its humanity and moderation. Their table was frugal ; but their food was wholesome, and in sufficient quantity. He even indulged them a certain portion

some time they found a protector in Cardinal Sadolet, the Bishop of Carpentras; but no endeavours of this worthy Prelate were sufficient to stop the furious zeal of these inflexible Enthusiasts. They set fire to the boroughs of Cabrières and Merindol, and destroyed their inhabitants with every thing they possessed. There remained in Cabrières but sixty men and thirty women, who surrendered themselves under promise that their lives should be spared; but as soon as they were in the power of these Fanatics, they were all put to the sword. Several women who had retreated to a church, were forcibly taken from their sanctuary, shut up in a barn, and consumed by fire. In fine, in their religious progress they utterly destroyed forty four villages, besides three hundred seats of private gentlemen, and pursued the unhappy fugitives with such unrelenting animosity that the whole face of that flourishing and populous country was strewed with carcases, and reduced to an hideous solitude, a scene of horror and disolation. *Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum!* See the *Histoire du Languedoc*: and the *Histoire des Albigeois et des Vaudois*, par le Pere Benoit. What would S. Ambrose have thought of these scenes of blood, he, who with many other illustrious Prelates refused even to join in communion with those who had been instrumental in procuring the death of Pricillian and his adherents! It is known that Ithacius and Idacius, two Bishops who were there chief accusers, were upon that account, considered as the objects of public detestation.—Yet all the frantic zeal of the first Crusaders against the peaceable Valdeuses was owing to the indulgence of forty days granted by Pope Innocent III to such as exerted themselves in these savage expeditions; and it is not in the power of language to express the miseries and mischiefs which the like abuses of power have caused to the human race. See Abbé Fleury's Ecclesiastical History.

portion of wine, and fruit in its proper season. Their habit was decent and cleanly. The *nocturnal* prayers which he appoints, had nothing unreasonably severe in the hot climate of Italy, where it was usual for all to take a portion of their daily repose, during the meridian heats. Obedience he recommended, because it is the basis of all society, without which no subordination can be preserved: but poverty and chastity are rather proposed as virtues to be acquired, than as vows which were irrevocable, such as they have since been introduced in many religious orders. If his disciples abandoned his institute, and again petitioned to be admitted, he commands them to be received; and the only punishment to which he makes them subject, is to place them in the lowest rank of the community. He forbids them to possess any thing in private, because this would naturally have been productive of dissensions. His ordinances with respect to the sick and infirm are full of tenderness. He would have them constantly employed in manual labour, to withdraw them from the idle speculations which occupied the Asiatic solitaries: nor was their work such as that of the Egyptian Monks, light and easy; but such as was to prove of essential use to society, the cutting down of forests, cleansing uncultivated lands, and the like exertions of toil and industry. Perhaps had he in view to prevent the abuses which always insensibly crept in, whenever this salutary duty was set aside. In short, the rule of this worthy Patriarch breathes throughout a spirit of meekness, discretion

discretion and philanthropy : and his statutes form a most excellent code of laws, which are always necessary where a multitude of men are assembled into a society, to prevent the disorders which would otherwise soon be occasioned by ambition; self love, or other more destructive passions. But, unfortunately, every human institution is subject to decline : and in every association where the sentiments of nature are counteracted by the severity of the discipline enjoined, and the individuals are freed from those distractions which are caused by the pleasures and occupations of a secular life, it soon degenerates from its original spirit. Hence not only most of the disputes which have risen in the church, and which have proved an endless source of prejudice and error, were raised by religious, or ecclesiastics; but they have also, on various other occasions, shewn a restless spirit of faction and intrigue. The great ideas they had framed of the excellence of their state filled them with pride : they gradually began to dogmatise, and form variety of caballing parties ; and their very industry which made them opulent, rendered them also ambitious. The true object of their respective legislators was to provide a calm retreat for the *children of peace* amidst the general disorders of society ; to afford them means of securing their innocence against the corruptions of a depraved world, or to give repentant sinners an opportunity of repairing, in a riper age, the follies of an irregular youth. But about the beginning of the ninth age, great relaxations were brought in; and the original schemes



schemes of these pious founders were totally subverted. Manual labour began to be neglected and despised ; long vocal prayers were substituted in its stead ; and the wise institutes of Benedict were set aside under the notion of embracing a more perfect system of life. A new distinction between Choir Religious and Lay-brothers was, in the eleventh age, introduced in the monastery of Vallombrosa ; and this has ever been a plenteous source of faction and disagreement. The privileges, immunities, and donations which were given by Kings and Emperors to various orders, overthrew the very essence of the institute. In an abbey of twenty or thirty Monks, who together enjoyed an annual income of two or three thousand pounds, each particular member began to plume himself with the idea of being a co-proprietor of these considerable revenues : the consequence of which generally was, that he sought to be nourished, clothed, and lodged, in at least as sumptuous a manner, as he supposed the convent could afford. Hence the diet, even where flesh meats were entirely prohibited, was delicate and expensive ; their dress was fine and costly ; and their apartments were furnished with every convenience, and many luxuries. Abbots would not stir abroad without the retinue of Princes, and were considered within the precincts of their jurisdiction, as so many absolute sovereigns ; and the stupendous magnificence of their churches and convents aided the illusion(a).

Many

(a) See the complaints of S. Bernard, in various parts of his writings.

Many were the abuses which arose from these innovations. Religious men moreover frequently engaged in the practice of the law, and physic; which occasioned a thousand breaches in discipline, much dissipation, and many irregularities: so that it was found necessary to forbid the Regular Clergy the exercise of these professions, as we see by the Councils of Rheims in 1131, Latran in 1139, and Tours in 1163.

When we consider the splendour and comforts enjoyed in these Religious Congregations, we cannot wonder at what we find related in the Chronicle of the Benedictin order, by a Spanish writer, viz. that it had in its bosom 47000 Abbeys, 14000 Priors, and 15000 Convents of women: that it had been embraced by 40 Popes, 200 Cardinals, 50 Patriarchs, 1600 Archbishops, 4600 Bishops, 12 Empresses, 41 Queens, and 3600 Canonised Saints. We may however allow that these were, in some degree, but the pious exaggerations dictated by the *Esprit de Corps* so deeply engraven in some of the children of Benedict(a). From this also frequently arose various jealousies and quarrels about their Founders, or such other subjects

## X

as

(a) It was doubtless a similar zeal which prompted Dom Bastide, a member of the *Maurist* Congregation, to impeach, at the general meeting of the order in 1677, his learned and pious confrere Mabillon. This great man, in his collection of the acts of the Saints who had flourished in the Benedictin society, had omitted to mention several whom this zealot esteemed worthy of notice; an instance of negligence or disrespect, which Dom Bastide considered as highly criminal:—But his complaints were treated with the just contempt which they deserved.

as were supposed, by their piety or erudition, to have reflected particular honour on their respective bodies; which proceeded so far, that Cajetan a Benedictin Abbot in the diocese of Pistoria in Tuscany about 1650, more full of zeal than science, maintained, in his writings, that *Ignatius of Loyola*, *Francis of Assysium*, and *Thomas Aquinas*, the Jesuit, Friar, and Dominican, were all of the order of S. Benedict. It was of this monopoliser of Saints that Cardinal Cobelucci humorously said, that he was greatly afraid he would soon discover S. Peter himself to have been a Benedictin (a).

The

(a) To form a complete idea of the extravagances which were occasioned by this unaccountable zeal for the glory of their respective orders, we may read a book entitled *Conformities of S. Francis with Jesus Christ*, in which the Enthusiastic De Albizis places his hero above all the Saints of Paradise, and equals him nearly to the Saviour of the world. Although these reveries of the Franciscan are now held in so much contempt, his work was approved of in a General Chapter of the order, assembled at Assysium in 1399. We must observe, however, that in latter editions, the original of this curious publication has been considerably altered. The best is that of Venice in fol. without date, or name of the printer; that of Milan in Gothic characters in 1510, containing, if compleat, 250 leaves; and another also at Milan in 1513. From this book it was that Erasmus Alberius chiefly collected the absurdities which he printed in 1531 under the title of *Alcoran of the Cordeliers*.

Those to whom such disquisitions can afford any entertainment, may consult two curious works published at Corduba about the year 1598, by Maldonado, a Spanish Carmelite, in which he maintains that the Prophets Elisha and Obadiah, the great grand-mother of our Saviour, S. Louis IX of France, &c. were religious of his order; as well as the Knights of Malta, at their institution. They may also refer to the *Annales sacri ordinis de monte Carmelo*, in 4 volumes folio, at Rome in 1656, written by father Lezana, full of impertinencies and folly.

The phrensy of erecting perpetually new orders of various denominations, obliged the Council of Latran in 1215 to forbid the establishment of any more: but this salutary law was so little minded, that shortly after several were instituted with the express approbation of the See of Rome(a). S. Basil in his rule would not allow in the same town of two different houses even of the same institute, for fear of quarrels and dissensions; and the decree of Latran was sixty years after renewed in the Council of Lyons: but ambitious zeal and importunity continued to prevail, as may be seen in the history of the 13th age, wherein so many new orders were admitted; and *sufficient* reasons were always found to neglect the positive determinations of these assemblies.

The Mendicants, more dependant on the See of Rome than others, were also in a particular manner attached to it; tho' the Bull for the suppression of the Jesuits, in 1773, acknowledges only in general terms that it owes to *the religious orders* its dignity and splendour. Hence it is natural that the Popes should at all times have declared themselves in favour of them, as in fact we find has always been the case. Thus they have reciprocally served to support each other; and this was perhaps the chief motive why the different institutes of Franciscans, notwithstanding the prohibitions of the councils, were solemnly approved; as well as those of the Dominicans,

X 2

(a) The Franciscans, Dominicans, Trinitarians, &c. sprang up during the reign of the very Pontiff, under whom this Council was held.



minicans, Capucins, &c. It is also remarkable that all the general superiors of the mendicant orders are obliged to reside at Rome. Innocent the 3d objected indeed at first to the scheme of Francis, when he applied of to have his new institute approved; till the cardinal of S. Paul, bishop of Sabina, told him that if he rejected the petition of that poor man, he must be cautious lest at the same time he rejected the Gospel itself. But, says Fleury, these good men had neither of them considered the text of the Apostle upon which the whole of their petition rested, *possess neither gold nor silver*: which evidently had no other meaning, than that the disciples were not to draw any pecuniary advantages from the gift which they had received of working miracles, beyond the mere necessities of life: as if Christ had said: "Gratuitously dispense, what you have gratuitously received; and rest assured that those to whom you shall have restored health or life, will never suffer you to be in want." This is, to be sure, the real sense of the passage; and it by no means proves that the world was obliged to feed those swarms of mendicants, (*ces bonnes gens*) who neither could work miracles, nor produce any other proofs of an extraordinary mission (a).

The

(a) The Apostle seems to have foreseen these abuses when he says to the Thessalonians *Ep. 2, c. 3, v. 10*. "Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat: for we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, not working, but going about as busy bodies." He would allow of no such idleness under any pretext whatever, even of Apostolic labour, unless they *faithfully* discharged the laborious functions of their calling, and proved themselves *worthy* of their hire,

The Popes would have rendered a much more signal service to religion if they had reformed and employed the secular Clergy in a proper manner, without calling in the unnecessary assistance of these foreign auxiliaries. They ought, at least, to have reduced the Hierarchy to two distinct orders of men: the *secular* Priests, destined to instruct and serve the people; and the *Monks*, who should live entirely separated from the world, and wholly occupied in working out their own salvation in silence and retirement. The *Ægyptian* Monks who inhabited the *barren* deserts, were obliged to labour for their subsistence; but the new modelled societies of the 13th age preferred *mendicity* to *labour*. Yet this did not meet with universal approbation. The venerable Guiges, in his *constitutions of the Carthusians*, calls begging an odious employment; and the council of Paris in 1212 ordains that religious persons when travelling from home, should be allowed a sufficient maintenance, that they might not be obliged to beg, *to the disgrace of the Lord and of their order*. Indeed Francis of Assysium enjoined his disciples manual labour, and only permitted them to beg, as a last resource, in case those who purchased their works, refused to pay them their stipulated price. He even forbade them in his last *Testament*, ever to apply to Rome for any privilege whatever, or to give any comment upon the simple rule which he had prescribed them. But he had scarce been dead four years, when the Friar minors assembled in chapter in 1230 obtained of

Pope

Pope Gregory the 9th a Bull which declared that they were not bound to observe this last Testament of their founder, nor the *Rule* he had given them. The consequence of this was a great relaxation and many abuses, within a few years after their institution. See the complaints of Mathew Paris, Peter des Vignes, &c. or even the less suspicious testimony of Bonaventure, their own general, in a letter which he addressed in 1257 to the *Provincials* and *Guardians* of the order.

Under pretext of charity they often undertook the management both of public and private affairs, which involved them in all the busy concerns of life. Besides, even in the service of the inquisition they were employed in various ways. For, however this may be esteemed an Ecclesiastical Tribunal; yet as the discharge of it was necessarily accompanied with informations, seizures, prisons, confiscations, tortures, &c. these *religious* were also necessarily transformed into *magistrates* with various beaules, informers, and other officers under their command, and considerable revenues in their coffers (a). This terrible court, though first established

(a) See the History of the Inquisition by the learned Limborch, printed at Amsterdam in 1692, in which are collected all the sentences pronounced by that Tribunal from 1303 to 1333, with many other curious particulars. Those who are not satisfied with the account given of it by this great man, may consult the *Schema Sanctæ Congregationis* published by Father Macedo, a Cordelier, in 1676, wherein we are assured that this Tribunal was first established in the Terrestrial Paradise, where God himself began to discharge the functions of Inquisitor, which he afterwards exercised with equal severity on Cain, and on those who undertook to erect the tower of Babel, &c. &c.



blished in France, has long since been execrated in that kingdom, as well as almost in every other part of the known world. It was not only calculated to produce ignorance and hypocrisy; but evidently trampled on the most sacred rights of humanity (a). To this is chiefly to be attributed the excessive rigour which is used with respect to such as were esteemed heretics, under various arbitrary pretences; and every member of society was obliged to denounce both himself and his dearest friends, if he suspected that either his own or their sentiments in religious matters were not entirely conformable to the *orthodoxy of the times*. This is expressly ordered in the 37 ridiculous laws drawn up in the Council of Narbonne at Beziers, in 1246, which have ever since been esteemed the basis of all the proceedings of this tyrannical court. We can therefore no longer wonder when we read of Bishops and Abbots at the head of armies of deluded fanatics, who, from a principle of religion, roved about the world in quest of heretics; or that these pious crusaders, as often as any were unfortunate enough to fall into their merciless clutches, threw them into the flames with

(a) "Quis, *says* Lactantius, Imponet mihi necessitatem vel credendi quod nolim; vel quod velim, non credendi? nihil tam voluntarium est quam Religio, in qua si animus averfus, iam sublata, iam nulla est." *Instit.* l. 5, c. 9. This was the spirit of the Gospel, and of the Meek and merciful Jesus. But the inquisitors of Heretical pravity in after ages, preferred to it the tyrannical and sanguinary system of Mahomet, when they substituted the fire and sword, prisons, racks and gibbets, to the more forcible arms of persuasion and benevolence.



with every demonstration of outrageous joy, as we are assured by Peter de Vaux-Cernay, a Monk of Citeaux; in his history of the Albigenſes. So alſo in the dioceſe of Chalons, in the preſence of the king of Navarre, the Archbiſhop of Rheims, nineteen Biſhops and many other Eccleſiaſtics, they burnt at once two hundred Manichees at the inſtigation and purſuit of a Dominican inquiſitor (a). It were

(a) This, it will be ſaid, ſhould not be attributed to the ſpirit of a Religion which diſavows all ſuch unjuſtifiable proceedings, but to the paſſions and prejudices of individuals, and the abuſe of power. Be it granted that this is the opinion which now almoſt univerſally prevails: yet there have certainly been ages wherein whoever preſumed to controvert the authority of ſuch Tribunals, were treated as enemies to the true *faith* of the Church. The learned Aonius Palearius was condemned to death, and burnt by orders of *Saint Pius V*, in 1569, for ſpeaking diſreſpectfully of the inquiſition: Galileo, becauſe in his *Dialogues* he maintained the motion of the Earth round the Sun, was obliged in 1633 by a decree ſigned by ſeven Cardinals, to recite, once a week, during three years, the ſeven Penitential Pſalms, and ſentenced to imprisonment. This venerable Philoſopher at the age of ſeventy was forced to abjure upon his knees, and with his hand upon the book of the Gospels, this ſentiment, as *heretical*: “*Corde ſincero et fide non ficta, abjuro, maledico, et deteſtor ſupradictos errores et hæreſes*:” though he was ſo fully convinced of the truth of what he had advanced, that the very moment after he roſe from this humiliating poſture, agitated with remorse for the falſe oath he had been compelled to take, he paſſionately ſtruck the ground with his foot, and could not refrain from crying out aloud, *e pur ſi move*, yet it certainly does move. The contrary ſentiment was evidently eſteemed at that time a point of faith; and the Court of Rome, the center of unity, is now admitted to have been under an error, to elude the reflection which would be made upon the abſurdity of its decrees. Giannone, who in his history of Naples published in 1723, had advanced ſome *bold* opinions concerning the origin and extent of the papal juriſdiction, could not

were greatly to be wished that such tragical scenes had never stained the records of any nation. But when we reflect that, although this persecuting spirit is disclaimed by the generality of the Roman Catholics in these latter ages, yet there are many thousands of narrow minded zealots still amongst them who shew both by their conduct and conversation, that they are, in every respect, properly qualified to shine in the office of Inquisitors; we cannot but lament the dread effects which flow from these intolerant maxims(a).

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not otherwise escape the revenge of that implacable court, than by flying to the protection of the King of Sardinia, who was obliged to *confine* him in a castle in Piedmont; that he might elude the pursuit of his enemies. From these and many other facts of a similar nature, we may venture to affirm that whatever the *principles* of that court may now be, its *practice* has often been detestable. But in reality, whoever has attentively considered some of the tenets of that church, will be apt to conclude that if such a tyrannical conduct does not essentially follow from, it is at least the natural consequence which always is, and ever will be drawn from them by the far greater part of its subjects. And Doctrines which are so liable to abuse, can never be the genuine dictates of a pure and benevolent Religion, which was to serve as a guide and rule of conduct to the illiterate and uninformed, no less than to the more enlightened portion of the Christian Society.

(a) As their power is not commensurate with their zeal, their intolerant spirit cannot display itself in a manner so palpably tyrannical and cruel: yet their behaviour often shews that they rather want the opportunity than the will to distinguish themselves in the annals of Religious phrenzy. Nor can all the endeavours of many sensible persons of that communion, as well amongst the Clergy as the Laity, entirely root out that spirit with which too many are still infected. This certainly arises from mistaken notions, and a very partial view of things: for "if men will allow themselves, says Mr. Enfield in his *Sermons for the use of Families*, to inquire with freedom into the principles of Religion, they will

This Tribunal was also commissioned to revise all the books which were suspected in any point to deviate from the received Doctrines of the Church. They were ordered to expunge a preface, an advertisement, a note; to blot out even a single line, or word, which seemed to patronize error: as may be seen at length in the *Index* of the Spanish Inquisition. Even to this day, no one in Roman Catholic countries is permitted, without a special license, under pain of excommunication incurred by the very act, to read any book or pamphlet which is not in all and every one of its parts approved of by the Censors: a circumstance which Fleury seems greatly to lament, as contrary both to common sense, and the permission of the Apostle, who advises all Christians to *examine every thing, and adhere to that which is good.*

soon gain such just and rational conceptions on this head, and be fully convinced of the importance of virtue above every thing else; --- they will become so sensible of the difficulties which attend every speculative scheme and established system, and so well acquainted with their own ignorance and weakness, that they will have little inclination to censure and condemn others, for a difference in opinion. They will find themselves incapable of treating their brethren with the least degree of neglect or reserve, merely on this account, while their temper and character, upon the whole, appear deserving of esteem. When men have had an opportunity of forming an extensive acquaintance with the world, and have seen that there are, in all religious sects --- persons of worth and goodness, and persons who would be a disgrace to any society; they soon learn to treat all speculative controversies, and party distinctions, with that indifference and contempt which they deserve. --- And we may be certain, that our moderation and charity will always increase, in exact proportion with our progress in the knowledge of men and things".

good. And such, he says, was unquestionably the practice of the primitive ages.

But we need only read the decrees of the various Councils of this age, to be persuaded of the false maxims and disorders which prevailed universally amongst the Clergy, as well Secular, as Regular. See the complaints of Innocent III, with respect to the monastery of Sublacus, near Rome, and his letter addressed in 1213 to the general chapter of Cluni; or that which he sent to the Cardinal Abbot of Mount-Cassin. With regard to the depravity of manners which reigned amongst the Students in the Universities, we may consult the writings of James of Vitri, Curate of Argenteuil; and we shall wish for no further information.

As to the Mendicant orders, the various abuses which were introduced amongst them were chiefly owing to the neglect of manual labour. When this was set aside, they lost the greater part of their time in idle discussions, inactivity, and sloth. We might cite, in proof of this assertion, a thousand instances from the Casuists and Scholastics, which are perfectly ridiculous, and to which those may have recourse who can read with patience such infamous absurdities(a): but we shall content ourselves with

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referring

(a) I have too great a respect for the delicacy of my readers, to give any minute account of the filth which is contained in the writings of some of the foreign Casuists. *Pontas* has made a voluminous *Dictionary of cases of conscience*, where every difficulty that can occur, is solved in an alphabetical order.

*Sanchez*



referring to the *History of Noses*, in a book entitled *Laus Brevitatis*; a satyr against the Dominicans, published under the name of *Petrus a valle Clausa*, and the *Trinitas Patriarcharum*; all three written by the learned Jesuit Raynaud who died in 1663. It is in the last mentioned of these works that he seriously proposes the question, whether a Carthusian, who by his rule is forbidden the use of flesh

Sanchez in his treatise *De Matrimonio* has specified, discussed, and explained every possible offence that can be committed against modesty, both in and out of the order of nature; and has entered into a greater detail of infamy, under pretence of conveying useful instruction, than is to be found in the most licentious productions of the age. I mention these in particular, because their writings are more universally known and respected: but every Scholastic Divine, the number of whom is very great, gives, in his Theological Lectures, a treatise upon these important and edifying subjects. That a set of men who are supposed from their infancy to be excluded from any connections with the other sex, should be obliged to be as intimately acquainted with them, with their feelings, their weaknesses or their misfortunes, as if they were educated to be anatomists or surgeons, may appear extraordinary. Yet a Confessarius in Roman Catholic countries, can scarce be excused from making these his peculiar study, if he is willing to discharge his duty in the manner it is traced out by the Casuists and Theologians. This will perhaps be acknowledged to be an unjustifiable abuse: it is however such as must subsist, as long as the present discipline prevails. A young Clergyman, perhaps not remarkable at any time for the regularity of his conduct, his temperance, or sobriety, when his passions are inflamed by indulgence, and his imagination is warmed by these pious lectures, is doubtless highly qualified to become the confident of the weaknesses or temptations of a beautiful young penitent, who, in the interesting situation of distress, applies to him for advice under the difficulties to which she finds herself exposed. This must be allowed to be a case full of risk and peril. I am aware it will be replied to this reflexion, that Almighty God seldom permits any evil to

arise

flesh meat even to save his life, may occasionally use any kinds of clysters prepared from such broths and juices. This he determines in the negative, “ unless it be absolutely requisite to prolong his days:” in which case, says he, he may be allowed the use of these nourishing remedies either by way of clyster, or in the form of a plaister applied to the regions of the stomach. *Pudet hæc opprobria - - - et non potuisse refelli (a).*

But it was not only within the walls of convents that they were thus employed : their labours were  
*equally*

arise from these circumstances, so common and yet so hazardous; and this will be dwelt upon as an argument of the propriety of such institutions, wherein Providence so visibly interposes. The fact I will in some degree admit; but draw a very different inference from it: and reply, that it is indeed to me a most convincing proof of the Providence of the Almighty, ever merciful and ever watchful over its creatures; but in a very opposite sense from that in which the remark is urged. The sole conclusion that I can justly draw from this observation, is; that if the all-merciful God does not indeed permit this institution to turn to the prejudice of such timorous and weak, though pious Christians, who hold it sacred because imposed upon them in his holy name, but actually does preserve them amidst these dangers in which, by every rule of reason and conviction of experience, they ought to meet their ruin; it only is in recompense of their confidence in him, and their sincere, though misguided endeavours to comply with what they think he requires of them.

(a) For the entertainment of the learned reader I shall subjoin part of a curious dialogue extracted from the *Theaurus precum*, published at Antwerp, by the Jesuit Saillius, in 1609, for the use of the young students of that order. He tells us that some suppose it to have been composed by S. Bernard in a vision or dream, *per nocturnum visum*. It is a conversation between a soul and a body condemned to Hell; in which  
after

*equally useful* in their various rambles about the world under pretence of begging alms. Their undaunted resolution in exorting the *gratuitous* oblations of the faithful was such, that Bonaventure, the General of the order, assures us that their very encounter was dreaded, as much as that of Highway-men.

after many mutual reproaches elegantly described, and evidently proving the guilt of the latter unfortunate offender, the author concludes as follows.

*Postquam tales anima prompserat maiores,  
Ecce duo dæmones, pice nigriores,  
Quos pennâ describere non possent scriptores,  
Nec mundi depingere totius pictores :*

*Ferreos in manibus stimulos ferentes,  
Ignemque sulphureum per os emittentes :  
Similes ligonibus sunt eorum dentes,  
Vixi sunt ex naribus prodire serpentes.*

*Aures erant patulæ, sanie fluentes,  
Et erant in frontibus cornua gerentes,  
Per extrema cornuum venenum fundentes ;  
Digitorum ungulæ ut aprorum dentes.*

*Isti cum funiculis animam ceperunt,  
Quam secum ad inferos gementem traxerunt :  
Mox maligni spiritus passim occurrerunt,  
Qui vice tripudij dentibus striderunt :*

*Et ei cum talibus votis applauserunt ;  
Quidam cum corrigiis ipsam perstrinxerunt,  
Quidam vacis ferreis ipsam disruperunt,  
Quidam plumbum feruidum in eam fuderunt.*

*Quidam finum stercoreum in os projecerunt,  
Et quidam in faciem eius imminxerunt :  
Quidam suis dentibus ipsam corroserunt,  
Denum & à corpore pellem detraxerunt.*

It is not necessary to give an English version of this curious piece of Poetry. My readers would not, I am sure, esteem it so edifying, as probably did the Pious and Reverend Thomas Saillius, or the Censors, Provincial, and other learned men whose approbation is prefixed to this collection of prayers. I relate it merely to shew how Religious men in those dark ages were employed ; and what were the methods taken to inculcate what was then, doubtless, esteemed a rational mode of worship.

men. And it is indeed natural that this vagabond kind of life should soon divest them of every remnant of modesty and shame, as well as expose them to every species of temptation and immorality. In short, the picture which he has given us of them in his writings, as it is without reply, so it is as full as severe as could have been traced by their most inveterate enemies<sup>(a)</sup>. Yet they had not, in his days, arrived at the summit of folly. Relaxations and divisions were afterwards carried to much greater lengths; which we must ascribe chiefly to the Scholastic disputes to which these brothers were perpetually trained and exercised. Each day gave rise to some new question of *weighty moment*, and every art of chicanery was displayed in these quibbling controversies, the effects of which were sometimes of most *serious* consequence. Thus, when John XXII condemned some doctrines they had advanced; the Franciscans, in revenge, declared the Pope to be an Heretic; as such, proceeded to depose him, and substituted one of their own creatures in his place. This was the conclusion of that boasted profession of humility, and poverty, which was introduced into

(a) Under this class we ought perhaps to mention the work of William de St. Amour, which he entitled *De Periculis novissimorum temporum*. The author of this severe satyr was a Doctor of Sorbonne, and was deputed to Rome to defend the rights of the University of Paris, which were attacked by the Mendicant orders. By these he has frequently been reckoned among the *Heretics*, and at their instigation he was condemned by Alexander IV, and deprived of all his livings: but his successor Clement IV, to whom S. Amour presented this *unorthodox* essay, received him very kindly, and did not seem to think it of such *dangerous* tendency.



into the Christian scheme in the 13th century ; and these *Religious* wars produced the most deplorable effects, both with regard to discipline, and doctrine. As to their own *private* debates under the above mentioned Pope, they were perfectly ludicrous : yet they occasioned such divisions amongst them, as had like to have caused a schism in the order. It was then discussed whether Christ and his Apostles had any possessions, either in common, or in particular ; at what moment, or whether at any time, the meat they swallowed became their own, as by a vow of poverty they had divested themselves of every kind of property ; whether their habit ought to be white, black, or grey ; of serge, or of cloth ; long, or short : whether their hood was to be round, or pointed ; wide, or narrow, &c. And these grave impertinencies produced as many congregations, chapters, bulls, manifestos, and other writings, as if the existence of Christianity was concerned, or the safety of all Europe.

This was also the age when the abuse of miracles(*a*) was most prevalent ; and no fiction was too gross

(*a*) Fleury acknowledges that many of the miracles which are related to have been wrought in the less enlightened ages, were often fabricated out of motives of temporal interest, to engage the people to make offerings to Churches, from a notion of some supernatural cures obtained by the intercession of the Saints to whom they were dedicated ; or to preserve the riches they were already possessed of. This, says he, is the end of most of the stories which are related in the collections of the wonderful actions of St. Martin, S. Benedict, and other most renowned Saints. Those who have resided abroad,

gross to be rejected. Not long before this time *James de Voragine* the Dominican, Archbishop of Genoa, published his *Golden Legend*, which is without dispute, the triumph of imbecillity, and extravagance: although, to the reproach of human reason, it passed, in the 15 century, through seven or eight editions. Fictitious relics(a), Pretences to extraordi-

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nary

abroad, and have had an opportunity of examining the immense treasuries of several Churches in France, Italy, and Spain; or who have seen the various paintings, the silver legs, arms, eyes, crutches, babies, and other offerings made in acknowledgment of some supposed miraculous cures, &c. which adorn every chapel or image of the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholic countries, will naturally be induced to think that such forgeries are still encouraged with the same self-interested views. It is, no doubt, a difficult matter to abolish these prejudices and superstitions of the vulgar; but whatever be the motive, they are certainly too much countenanced even in the present times, particularly by the Mendicant orders; as much to the disgrace of reason, as to the detriment of Religion.

(a) This was indeed a very early abuse. St. Augustin *De opere Monachorum*, c. 28, complains that the sale of relics was become a lucrative branch of commerce, even in his days. "*Membra martyrum, says he, si tamen martyrum, venditant; et omnes petunt, omnes exigunt, aut sumptus lucrosæ egestatis, aut simulatæ pretium sanctitatis.*"

The relics of the human body should always be treated with a certain degree of respect, and decently interred: and it is natural to wish that those of persons whose memory is dear to us, should be rescued from every profanation, which may offend our ideas of propriety, and decency. Any further veneration for them is neither consistent with reason, nor consonant to scripture; or the practice of the three first ages of the Christian Church. What was then observed with regard to the relics of the martyrs, was highly fit and rational, such as the circumstances of the times required; but the present practice in Roman Catholic countries, though only

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nary piety, the Art of captivating the good will of rich widows, or young unexperienced votaries of either Sex, the erection of various Confraternities, *Wonderful* accounts of Habits and Scapulars received from Heaven, ridiculous Grants of indulgencies(a) equally

an *inferior* kind of worship, if not in itself an unjustifiable obervance when duly explained, is liable to great abuses.

The tooth of our Saviour which is shewn at S. Medard's Church, at Soissons (see the *Traité des Reliques des Saints*, by Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-courcy, in the diocese of Laon); The milk of the Virgin Mary, actually preserved in the Collegiate Church of S. Amé, at Douay, in Flanders; or a large portion of the reed that was put into Our Saviour's hand, *Matt.* 27, and which is still to be seen in the same town, are surely some of the grossest impositions, and forgeries. A thousand others might be mentioned equally authentic, which are still held forth to the veneration of the faithful in this enlightened age! and what is worse, is, that many of these *miraculous* relics, as well as images, pictures, crucifixes, &c. are frequently more venerated and visited by the generality of the lower class of people, than the Sacrament itself, which they are taught to believe is the very God of Heaven, *who giveth not his glory to another*, *Isaiah* xlii, 8, really and substantially present. Such impostures and abuses should certainly not be tolerated, even upon the supposition that the Doctrine itself upon which they are founded, could in some measure be maintained.

(a) Many of the extensive Indulgencies of a thousand years or more, which are to be met with in various prayer books printed abroad, are, doubtless the inventions of *pious fraud*, and were never given by the Court of Rome. Yet it is no less true that many ridiculous grants of that nature, whether *plenary* or *partial*, have frequently been, and are still daily issued out upon the most frivolous pretences, and on the most trifling occasions. It is the just complaint of the more sensible part of that Communion, that the adoration of God *in spirit and truth*, is not only much obscured and neglected by some of these very *questionable* observances; but that the Christian scheme itself is thereby frequently exposed to the scorn of infidels and libertines.

equally extravagant and numerous, and other such like inventions either of artful Policy or credulous Enthusiasm, seemed now to have put the keys of Heaven into the hands of the Mendicant Friars: and few Christians presumed to hope for mercy, but through their means. Even those who had led the most abandoned lives, if they could but die in the humble weeds of Religion, and bequeathed to *pious* purposes those riches which they could no longer make subservient to their pleasures, persuaded themselves too often that they had little reason to despair, whilst under the protection of such powerful Mediators.

By their rambling lives, and their address in the management of Secular concerns, these industrious Beggars soon gained the upper hand in the Church. Other orders that were less active, gradually became neglected and despised; whilst these alone insinuated themselves into all the Schools, and Pulpits (*a*). In consequence of this, the Monks also began to frequent the Universities, in order to support their expiring credit; which proved an abundant source of dissipation;

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(*a*) Those who are desirous of seeing some specimens of their Oratory, may consult the pious farces of Michael Menot, under the title of *Sermones Quadragesimales* in 1519 or 1525; or of Oliver Maillard, another Cordelier, who was a Doctor of Sorbonne, and much esteemed by Innocent III, and Charles VIII of France. The most original piece of this writer is a discourse which he pronounced at Bruges, in 1500. This was printed in 4to: and those places at which the Preacher was to take breath or cough, are marked in the margin by *Hem! Hem!* See the collection of his Sermons in 3 volumes 8vo. full of indecent and ridiculous buffoonery.



tion, luxury, and ambition. The titles and distinctions with which they were decorated, utterly extinguished the spirit of their profession; and this success, as well as the many comforts to which it seemed to entitle them, drew innumerable Profelites into their convents. Benedict had judiciously ordained that none should be admitted amongst the number of his disciples, unless they underwent the severest trials, *prædicentur omnia dura & aspera, &c*: But now this lowly institute was embraced as a life of ease, or the securest road to splendor and preferment.

It is not at all essential that there should be any Religious in the Church: but, if there are, it is essential that they should be more exemplary and virtuous than other Christians. This made Guiges, the pious Carthusian, affirm that the *best* Religious order, was that which admitted the *fewest* subjects. And undoubtedly, a Monk(*a*) who is not far more exact and edifying in his life than the generality of those who remain in society, must, even in the ideas of such as approve in some degree of the Religious state, appear an awkward kind of being, whose conduct is in perpetual contradiction with his profession. It is expected that he should lead a life of silence, prayer, mortification, and retirement; whereas it is, even in these better days,

(*a*) Under this appellation I mean to comprehend all those, without distinction, who engage to live under any particular Religious rule.

days, too often a life of dissipation, self-love, and garrulity. Instead of giving the good examples which should appear in every word and action of a Solitary, if at any time his duties *can* oblige him to mingle with society; how frequently does he not endeavour to divest himself of the humble garb of his profession, and rather chuses to affect the polite gentleman, the elegant scholar, or even, the agreeable companion!

The very study of the sciences and the languages, to which in many congregations they now apply themselves with great success, (whatever Mabillon<sup>(a)</sup> has speciously advanced to the contrary in his reply to Dom Rancé the famous abbot of *La Trappe* <sup>(b)</sup>,) contributes greatly to inspire a worldly spirit; and is opposite, in every respect, to the notion which was entertained for many hundred years of the duties of that calling, and the very essence of a Religious state.

I would, by no means, here be understood to blame their application to useful studies: for ignorance is always the fruitfull mother of prejudice, and vice. But I maintain that it is incompatible with the rules which they profess to follow <sup>(c)</sup>. Besides,

(a) *Traité des Etudes Monastiques.*

(b) *Traité de la Sainteté des devoirs de la vie Monastique.*

(c) Even Collet himself, the Theologian so much in vogue at present in the Seminaries abroad, somewhere in his writings remarks (speaking of Mountfaucon's *Antiquité expliquée* in 15 vol. fol.) that it was a subject of astonishment to many worthy Christians that this great and pious man should have been so long employed in publishing a work, which a modest person would be ashamed to look into.

fides, their various Laws, Constitutions, Ceremonies, and Observances, essentially cramp the mind, and prevent the effects of genius. Where a person is under such constraint, and is obliged to be so circumspect both in his conversation, and in his writings, he neither has a fair field to improve or to display his talents, nor can we imagine that he will always dare to expose his real sentiments on many subjects, which otherwise his superior knowledge and erudition might, perhaps, enable him to elucidate. Thus the learned Mabillon himself, when in 1685 he visited the Catacombs at Rome, was accused before the congregation of the Index for a pamphlet which he published upon *the worship of unknown Saints*(a); and would have been condemned, if he had not new-modelled it in a second edition, and pacified the Inquisitors(b).

I said above, that their application to the sciences was foreign to the spirit of their profession: and in reality,

(a) This was given to the public under the title of *Eusebius the Roman, to the Frenchman Theophilus, concerning the worship of unknown Saints*.

(b) We have however seen in an instance of more modern date, how dangerous it is for any to speak their real sentiments, under such arbitrary governments. In the Brief for the suppression of the Jesuits, in 1773, the Pope forbade under pain of excommunication, every discussion of the subject of this famous Bull, whether in favour or disapprobation of the step he had thought proper to take. Happily for those Fathers, this Edict was not published in many parts of Europe: otherwise, notwithstanding the attachment they have generally professed for the *Holy See*, we apprehend there would be but very few of them remaining within the pale of the *Roman Church*.

reality, we see that many monasteries in Roman Catholic countries, are now, in consequence of this change of discipline, become mere Seminaries of Students, almost wholly occupied in worldly pursuits, and worldly conversation. For they oftentimes are seemingly more interested in all the various scenes which disturb society, than such as are actually engaged in the bustle: nor is there any occurrence in Church or State in which they do not think themselves concerned; or scarcely any anecdote in private families, with which they do not seek to become acquainted. That this is, in general, a fair representation of facts, every candid person must acknowledge: though not without exceptions, as well with respect to individuals, as to particular orders, or communities. And the uniformity of life which reigned amongst the ancient Monks of Egypt was, surely, as Fleury most justly observes, much preferable in every sense to that of a modern unshod mendicant, or any more *genteel* Conventual, who after having disciplined himself at home, escapes, under one pretext or other from his solitude, to enjoy a hearty meal abroad, or shine in a circle of jovial companions.

This new portion of the Hierachy, when once it became considerable, occasioned much confusion in the system; and many Religious communities, devoted by the most solemn engagements to poverty, humility, and silence, are now transformed  
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into Colledges of lordly and ambitious Ecclesiastics, more occupied with the affairs of their Abbey, than solicitous to discharge the essential duties of the of the monastic state. It is even a fact that there is frequently as much anxiety and stir amongst these Conventuals to arrive at an honourable or lucrative employment, or to exclude a rival, as there is in the courts of Princes. A General of an order, a Provincial, an Abbot, a Grand Provost, or, in fine any other superior Officer, considers himself as a person of consequence; and in proportion to his income, enjoys every comfort of life. Thus a Vow of Poverty is often a means of arriving at a state of independency and opulence, to which they could have had no pretensions, if they had remained in the world.

I do not pretend to say that this is always to be considered in a criminal light. They perhaps may eat their bread with thanks, and enjoy the good things of life with a grateful heart. But this is, surely, not the spirit of the institute which they profess to follow, nor the intention of their pious Founders. If they were fond of a life of action, and desired to partake of *the loaves and fishes*, wherefore did they not remain in society; and as they have their portion in its blessings, share likewise in its burdens? Or if they pretend to lead a life of Penance, why do they engage in a life of ease and enjoyment?

In short, although we should admit that their lives are regular, and their conduct irreproachable, they



fect as those who live in the world : or if they are given to fewer vices, they are likewise possessed of fewer virtues. Such is the character which is generally given them even by Roman Catholics. Now, if this be true with respect to those who are the least aspiring in these humble retreats; how much less innocent will others be deemed, whose studies are all directed to procure them the “Bubble reputation;” or to advance them to the dignities of their order. Thus, says the learned Historian whom I have so often cited, in Italy, a Dominican applies himself to study, that he may be called to Rome in quality of Theologian to some Cardinal, *Consultor* of some religious congregation; or to fit himself for some office in the Inquisition.—There are a few who carry their ambitious aim so high, as to have in view the rank of Nuntio, Cardinal, or Bishop : whilst others more modest, consider the various *preferments* of their own Order as the ultimate boundaries of their pretensions.

From all these considerations we will not hesitate to conclude, that many an imperfect *Religious*, might, if he had been employed in the active duties of society, perhaps have been a much more perfect citizen, and of consequence, a better man : nor can it be denied but that Convents are often filled with very tepid Christians. They may be called Sanctuaries from Vice ; but they should be also termed the Graves of Virtue : such at least as tends to expand the soul, and to improve its faculties.

ties. Perhaps, infine, these various votaries of either sex have many chances in their favour towards obtaining the rewards of Heaven, or rather of not being utterly rejected: but certainly they can pretend to little merit; and can lay claim to none but the smaller prizes, in the general day of retribution, while the greater crowns will be reserved for such as have sustained with patience the labours of the combat.

Thus I have endeavoured to give some general idea of the motives which first gave rise to the *Religious* state, with a succinct account of its progress, its utility, and abuses. Had it been a mere ideal scheme, or such as we could now contemplate but in a retrospective view, my labour might have been superseded. But I have been, unhappily, obliged to consider it as an establishment which actually does subsist in many countries, and is not likely to be abolished, perhaps for ages yet to come. For we have seen the many causes which too powerfully operate for its conservation, to leave us much room to hope that it will so soon be set aside; or that mankind will seek for the perfection of its faculties by those means alone which sober reason dictates, and return to the genuine spirit of the Gospel: a period which every well-wisher to humanity looks towards with longing concern.

If any of these Societies do at all exist; I think they should be such alone, as adhere to the primitive institution of the Cenobitical life. They might,  
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undoubtedly,



undoubtedly, be so calculated as to afford a comfortable asylum to those, who after having performed the duties owing to society, wish to conclude their days in peace, at a distance from the more distracting cares and bustle of life. But they should, at least, be only open to the few who from peculiar inclination, or other personal circumstances, might be desirous of retiring to a quiet and temporary refuge, such as might either contribute to alleviate the grievances of affliction, or to facilitate their happiness.

The greater part of the reflections which I have introduced in this long digression, is taken from the Ecclesiastical History of Fleury, or his excellent Discourses on it, which contain many other just and pertinent observations. This will perhaps, in the eyes of many, entitle them to a greater degree of attention and respect, than if they had been drawn from less *suspicious* sources. The testimony of this estimable *Roman Catholic* writer will scarce be rejected even by many who are afraid of harbouring a single idea which does not bear with it the impression of Orthodoxy. For there are some who possibly may condescend in a leisure moment to peruse this Essay, that rather stand in need of milk, than solid food, 1 *Cor.* iii; and with whom *authority* is more prevalent than reason. Upon this account, that it might be of more general utility, I have throughout argued from authority, as well as reason: although I am fully persuaded that mankind would be much more happy, if  
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according to the judicious advice of S. Cyprian, they did not so much enquire, in religious matters, what was practised by those who went before them; but, was appointed by Christ, who was before all. Non quærendum est, quid aliquis ante nos fecerit; sed quid ille qui ante omnes est, faciendum jusserit.

As I had undertaken to give some account of the History of Celibacy, it also naturally fell within my plan to notice those institutions which have chiefly contributed to introduce or to confirm the persuasion of its excellence. But as we have seen the motives to which they mostly owe their birth, and the effects with which they have often been attended, as well in past ages, as in present times; it will not be difficult to form a competent opinion concerning either their necessity, or usefulness; and how far they ought to be countenanced in any nation where a true sense of Religion prevails, or a regard for the welfare of Society.

I will now return to my more immediate subject, and proceed to clear up one or two more objections which are drawn from the sacred writings to prove the expediency of Religious vows; or their indispensable obligation in every circumstance, if they once have been imprudently pronounced.

Several Texts have been adduced from *Eccles. v. v. 4, Numb. xxx, Deut. xxiii, &c.* to shew that every vow must be religiously complied with. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, *says the Jewish Lawgiver*, thou shalt not slack

to pay it : for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee.”—I admit of the authority. But Roman Catholics can not, with any propriety, urge these passages ; since they universally maintain in practice that any vow may, upon certain occasions, be lawfully rescinded. Their Bishops may dispense with many, and the Pope with all. Nay the *Faculties* which are even granted to the Missioners in England, empower them “to dispense with for a reasonable cause, and change all simple vows, excepting those of Continency and Religion,” which are reserved to Rome. This clearly shews that even they unanimously hold that vows which are made without due reflection, or which cease to promote the ends for which they were originally intended, may, oftentimes cease to oblige, as circumstances vary ; especially when the rights of a third person are not thereby injured. If this be then the case ; these passages are so far from concluding anything against, that they rather strongly make in favour of what I have advanced : and I cannot too often repeat that it is very unfair to cite such authorities as these, entirely foreign to the question, which only serve to bewilder the argument, and perpetuate illiberal cavil.

Some have insinuated that Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts* v.) had made a vow of poverty, or, at least, of disappropriation. But the contrary is evident from the very words of the Apostle. “While it (his riches) remained with thee, said S. Peter to Ananias, was it not thy own, and after  
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it was sold, was it not still in thy possession?" He was punished for his dissimulation, and "Lying to the Holy Ghost." Endeavouring to impose on him to whom his hypocrisy had been revealed, he affirmed that he had given all to God, when he had retained a comfortable portion for himself. He was moreover guilty of an injustice, by attempting to secure for himself and family a provision from the common fund, without contributing his full contingent. We have even some grounds to presume that he was actuated by a design still more impious, that of tempting God, or of trying to discover whether it were impossible to conceal from him his fraudulent intention, *see* v. 9: all which were crimes that might be of most pernicious influence in the beginnings of the Christian Church.

I have now endeavoured to explain the chief of those passages of Scripture which are supposed to favour a single life; though I have not the vanity to affirm that what I have offered in illustration of them is, in every instance, perfectly satisfactory and unexceptionable: particularly, as I have sometimes produced various *probable* interpretations of the same passage. There will still always remain some difficulty to ascertain the precise meaning of any version, where the original itself is confessedly obscure. Much less, therefore, do I wish to obtrude the explications I have given, as the undeniable sense of the Apostles. All I desire, is, that they  
may



may not be rejected merely because they are different from those which we have been ourselves accustomed to admit, or such as we have read in other Commentaries on the sacred writings; for “This first impression, as Dr. Priestly observes in his preface to his *Harmony*, may arise from nothing more than former fixed associations of ideas, which may have no foundation in truth.” Neither do I mean to inculcate that the interpretations commonly given by the Fathers to some of these texts, are all equally to be rejected; but only the unfair conclusions that are drawn from them. For, supposing even that the real meaning of our Blessed Saviour in *S. Matthew*, or of S. Paul, in his *Epistles*, were such as they have oftentimes sought to represent it; which, as we have seen above, is far from being evident: yet all that I have advanced, will, in a general view be equally conclusive.

I have also laboured to give, from the various councils held in different ages, some idea of the practice which prevailed at various times, and in various countries; together with the opinions of many respectable writers both ancient and modern. To these I might have added many more nearly of the same import, had I thought it would have served any useful purpose. But I am sensible that such authorities will be always liable to cavil and exception, as to the genuine reading of the passage, the occasion on which it was written, its real meaning, &c. So that after much wrangling, and probably some

some abuse, the question, if it were to be determined by *authority* alone, might still appear to many, undecided. If, however, I had collected even a much smaller number of *opinions*, they would, I trust, have been more than sufficient, in the eyes of unprejudiced *reason*, to establish what I had undertaken to prove.—Thus far I have chiefly considered my subject in a moral light.

In a *PHYSICAL* view, I might shew the impropriety of a single state for the generality of mankind, and the evils in which it involves many thousands of such as with the best intentions enter into these engagements, from various writers who have incidentally mentioned the deplorable effects which an obstinate adherence to a life of Celibacy often produces in the human frame. But having already extended this Essay to a much greater length than I at first intended; I shall beg leave to refer for fuller information on this head, to Galen *De locis affectis*, l. 6, c. 5; Zacutus *Prax. Admirand*, l. 2, obs. 85; M. Sauvages in his *Nozoology*; M. Lieutaud's *Precis de Medecine*; the Authors of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire de Chirurgie & de Medecine*, tom. 4; The Treatise *De L'homme & de la Femme dans L'Etat de Mariage*, printed at Lille in 1772; Nic. Zindel. *De Morbis ex castitate nimia oriundis*, Basileæ 1745; the *Thesis* of M. Reneaume *Sur la Virginité Claustrale*; and others. It is unnecessary to make a vain parade of erudition, by citing their authorities

at large : since every person who has leisure to read, has it in his power, with very little merit, to multiply quotations. But the fact is, I believe, too generally admitted, to be called in question ; whatever Father *Flexier de Reval* (Xavier de Feller) has insinuated to the contrary in his *Philosophical Catechism*. And if the Physicians both *Corporal* and *Spiritual* who attend the Religious communities abroad, could ingenuously communicate, at least in general terms, the cases that come to their knowledge ; we should, doubtless, be further convinced of the ravages produced, both in body and mind, by this preposterous law(a).

Considered as a POLITICAL institution, Celibacy can surely in no kingdom or nation, pretend to much indulgence. M. de Mirabaud, in his excellent Treatise on Population entitled *Ami des Hommes*, has endeavoured to shew that Religious establishments rather tend to increase than to diminish the number of the inhabitants in a state, because  
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(a) As a further detail of the proofs which evince the impropriety of this Ecclesiastical injunction when considered in a physical as well as in a moral light, would be in great measure useless ; so it might also probably be as offensive to the generality of readers, as it would be disagreeable to the writer. Its consequences are really often dreadful, as may be seen in the above mentioned Authors, even in such as truly persevere in the observance of it : but with respect to some, whose passions no motives either of reason or religion are sufficient to controul, the effects of this law are infinitely more deplorable. See Tissot's *Dissertation sur L' Onanisme*, Lewis's *Practical Essay on the Tabes Dorsalis*, &c.

in consequence of these institutions, a greater number of men consume less, and occupy a smaller compass of ground : and says, that the depopulation so much complained of in different parts of the universe, is owing to a want of the means of subsistence, and the difficulty of procuring food.—He might have added that, with respect to Europe, it is also caused by war ; by emigrations into distant continents in view of interest ; by the great increase of useless Domestics of either sex ; by luxury, and the many unwholesome trades which are necessary for its support ; by the *voluptuous* Celibacy now so much in fashion ; by intemperance, and high seasoned foods ; and above all perhaps, by the many unnatural crimes which are occasioned by that depravation of manners which too universally prevails in every rank of men. But though we should admit, with this ingenious writer, that such Establishments are not indeed without their utility to states in some respects ; still surely the idea that *Celibacy* contributes to the *Population* of the Earth, is a Paradox which cannot be seriously maintained. At least we may pronounce it manifestly contrary to the received opinions of mankind in every nation, and in every age. The laws enacted by *Lycurgus* against such as led a single life were remarkably severe : the *Romans* oppressed them with heavy fines : and *Augustus* not only increased the penalties which were inflicted on them by *Julius Cæsar*, but encouraged matrimony by proportionable immunities and rewards.



There are various other callings in Society besides the Ecclesiastical state, in which, circumstances oblige many hundred thousand citizens to a life of Celibacy; as the Military profession, and that of domestic servants. Wherefore then increase their number, not only without necessity, but without propriety, or any reasonable plea? The globe which we inhabit, this small portion of the immense system of the creation, is yet but thinly peopled. According to the late admeasurements of the French Academicians, the Earth contains in surface 25,858,089 square leagues; and M. Vauban assures us that one square league, if properly cultivated, can easily maintain 800 men. The fourth part, therefore, of this great surface, (which is nearly the proportion that land bears to water) could afford subsistence to 5,171,617,600 inhabitants; or more than seven times as many as actually exist upon it. For, according to the most probable estimates, and conjectures (see the *Esprit des Journalistes de Trevoux*, tom. 1), the population of the Universe does not amount to more than seven hundred and twenty millions. And though a great abatement may, for many obvious reasons, be made to this calculation of the numbers which the Earth might *possibly* maintain; still we evidently see that there is yet sufficient room for the Human Race to spread. Therefore, whatever may contribute to diminish population should be universally discouraged, as well by the Magistrate, as by the Moralist. And it will be found that where-

ever

ever matrimony is promoted and held in esteem, there also, in proportion, will Mankind become more civilized, more virtuous, and more happy(a). "There is no situation in life, says the elegant writer whom I have often had occasion to quote (*De Ep. con.*), more safe, more peaceable, more pleasant, more desirable. --- It was instituted by Almighty God; it is ordained by nature, advised by reason, approved of by writers both sacred and profane (b). It is commanded by various laws, praised by the unanimous consent of nations, and counselled by the examples of the best of men."

Even

(a) Perhaps it were even to be wished that the law of Celibacy which still subsists in our Universities with regard to many of its most respectable members, were, if possible, totally abolished. Much may, doubtless, be advanced on either side of this question: but the advantages which would arise from this permission, would, likely, greatly overbalance the inconveniencies that might follow from it. See on this subject an humorous pamphlet printed at Cambridge in 1765, entitled the *Council in the Moon*.

(b) The humane reader will not be offended if I here insert the pleasing reflection of Sterne on this subject, in his sermon upon the beginning of the 19th chapter of Judges, "A good heart, says this pathetic writer, wants some object to be kind to. Let the torpid solitary seek Heaven comfortless and alone, God speed him!—Let me be wise and religious.—But let me be a man. Wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever may be the road I take to get to thee, give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark how our shadows lengthen, as the Sun goes down;—to whom I may say, how fresh is the face of nature? How sweet the flowers of the field? How delicious are these fruits?"

Erasmus seem even to have pronounced that marriage is in some degree a duty with respect to all mankind, unless in some very peculiar

Even the austere Jerom himself acknowledges that *Marriage fills the World; but Virginity, Heaven.*—I have often wondered, on the contrary, that some of the ancient Fathers who delighted much in conceits and calculations even of the most ludicrous nature, as appears from many passages in their works, did not, upon this very supposition, rather discountenance Celibacy, and encourage the married state, that more intelligent Beings might receive existence, and contribute by their united homage to the glory of their Beneficent Creator.

To conclude: Upon a review of what I have here advanced, I think I may affirm that I have shewn in the foregoing pages, that a life of Celibacy, as enjoined to the Clergy and Religious in Roman Catholic countries, is neither countenanced nor even insinuated in the sacred Scriptures; that it is not founded upon the known practice of the Apostles, or others, in the first and purest ages of Christianity; that it never was universally observed at any period of time; that whenever a motion was made to introduce it as a general law, this always met with opposition, and was protested against by many as highly injudicious and oppressive; that it has been upheld by a false idea of the excellence

peculiar circumstances. See *De Epif. Conf. c. 47.* This work, although it is not a Doctrinal composition, yet evidently shews what were the sentiments of that aimable and liberal man, who was an ornament to the age in which he lived.

excellence of Virginity, and a preposterous notion of the uncleanness of Marriage, derived from the illusions of Heretics, and a misconception of the Holy Writings; that, considering the state of man and his various duties to God, his neighbour, and himself, it is of little service towards arriving at the perfection taught in the Christian Law; that it has occasioned infinite abuses; that being originally founded on prejudice, it has been handed down by the same unequitable means; that it is an unnatural state, destructive of the happiness of individuals and of Society, whether it be considered in a moral, a physical, or a political light; that the *Vows of Religion*, as they are termed in Roman Catholic countries, have no foundation in Scripture, even as *Evangelical Councils*; that there actually is no *vow* of Continency either tendered to, or taken by the *secular* Clergy abroad; nor by those who engage in some *religious* orders: that, if there were, it ought in certain circumstances to be esteemed of no validity or obligation; that the Church has no authority to declare the marriage of the Clergy null and void; that if any of their Clergy should actually enter into the marriage state, this sacred contract could never be rescinded without a grievous crime, &c. &c. &c. All this I presume I have supported by fair argument, and undeniable facts; nay even by the authority of those very Fathers who are often cited to prove the opposite sentiment: though I have sometimes been forced



forced to shew them inconsistent with each other, and with themselves.

In relating particular facts, I may have been misguided, in some few instances, by the writers whom I have been obliged to consult; not having had it in my power to verify every quotation in its original author. I may occasionally have confounded names, or have fallen, inadvertently, into other still less material errors, which cannot at all affect the question in debate. In some points I possibly may have been mistaken; and my arguments may not all, perhaps, be equally conclusive. Yet, granting all this, of which however I am not conscious in any single instance; I think notwithstanding that, upon the whole, I have incontestibly proved the assertions which I made in my former pamphlet(a).

It is not my intention to depreciate a state of Celibacy with respect to those few individuals who either from circumstances or inclination may be induced to prefer a single state. I have spoken of it only as a burden imposed on a considerable portion of Society in Roman Catholic Countries; and in this view I have shewn it of pernicious influence on the happiness and morals of Mankind, as well as an unjust invasion of its rights. Had I rather sought to amuse, than to inform; I had frequent opportunities

(a) *Letter from a Catholic Christian, to his Roman Catholic Friend.*

portunities of introducing in the course of this Essay, a variety of ludicrous and malignant observations: but to entertain the reader by ridiculous anecdotes was not the purport of my researches. My only wish was to have these various questions examined with candour, because I think that I have been, for many years, misled in my own conceptions of them. If what I have advanced be just and true, may those TRUTHS be universally acknowledged; as well as the *necessity* of introducing some change of Discipline in every Society of Christians, where Celibacy is now enjoined with so much rigour, and so little propriety. If, on the contrary, it is built on fallacious argument, or a deceitful representation of the controversy; may it be confuted.—However, should any one be still inclined to justify the practice of the *Roman* Catholic Church in this point; he should consider that it will not be sufficient to invalidate any particular part of what I have offered in support of the sentiment which I have embraced, but he must also shew that the conclusions which I have formed, are not fairly deduced from the different premises which I have laboured to establish.

F I N I S.

The READER is desired to correct the following  
E R R A T A.

PAGE 15, Note, *line* 4, presen, *read* presentia.

18. *l.* 12. thousand, *r.* thousands.

26. *l.* 2. pontifs, *r.* pontiffs.

40. *l.* 7. Pontif, *r.* Pontiff.

61. *l.* 8. even, *r.* he even.

70. *l.* 15. are, *r.* is.

81. *l.* 6. superiur, *r.* superiour.

84. *l.* 14. Plebeians, *r.* Plebeian.

98. *l.* 9. definible, *r.* definibile.

104. *l.* 24. drink, *r.* drinks.

176. *l.* 3. effects, *r.* efforts.









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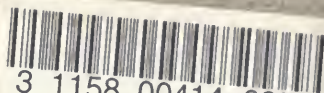
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